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DISCOURSES

ON

PRACTICAL

SUBJECTS.

3 La  
BY JOHN MOIR. K

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—Some are too indolent to read any thing 'till its reputation is established.—What is new is opposed, because most are unwilling to be taught; and what is known is rejected, because it is not sufficiently considered, that men more frequently require to be reminded, than informed.

JOHNSON.

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THE COURSE

OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

DISCOURSE I.

ON

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.



# DISCOURSE

On the Birth of Christ.

LUKE. II. 7.

and she brought forth her first-born son  
and wrapped him in swaddling clothes,  
and laid him in a manger, because there  
was no room for him in the inn.

THE texture of the human mind  
is wonderfully fine and exquisite,  
like a piece of finely painted canvas. In  
every possible position, the strikes the  
philosophic eye with new dignity and  
grace; and such her innate and universal  
flexibility, that no situation whatever  
can surprise her for a moment into one  
unpleasant attitude.

- The subject to which the words now  
read direct our present meditations,  
exemplified, at the same time that it  
suggests this idea in a very beautiful  
B 2

# DISCOURSE I.

## On the Birth of Christ.

LUKE, ii. 7.

*And she brought forth her first-born Son,  
and wrapped him in swaddling clothes,  
and laid him in a manger, because there  
was no room for them in the inn.*

THE texture of the human mind is wonderfully fine and exquisite: like a piece of masterly painting, in every possible position, she strikes the philosophic eye with new dignity and grace; and such her innate and universal flexibility, that no situation whatever can surprise her for a moment into one awkward attitude.

The subject to which the words now read direct our present meditations, exemplifies, at the same time that it suggests this idea in a very beautiful

#### 4 DISCOURSE I.

manner. So deeply is the heart interested in all who deserve well of society, that the most trifling incidents in their history become objects of common curiosity. The lives of heroes commence not with their public, but private characters; and every little anecdote of their childhood, as well as the more illustrious exploits of their riper years, is contemplated by posterity with a mixture of admiration and reverence.

Add the ties of consanguinity to those of society, and this amiable and distinguishing attachment acquires new propriety and ardour. The redemption of the world from ignorance, depravity, and guilt, whoever had been the agent, is entitled to the warmest and most lasting commemoration of all mankind: But when we recollect to whose immediate interposition we owe this unexpected event, our feelings assume a higher tone, and deserve some more endearing

# DISCOURSE I. 5

appellation. The inexplicable sympathies of nature, in that case, awaken and mingle insensibly with all the various modifications of gratitude, and fill our souls with rapture.

Thus the Evangelists, Apostles, and primitive Christians, considered our Saviour both as their best friend and kindest relation. In this light alone all their sayings and sentiments concerning him are elegant and natural: for whatever we say, or feel, about one to whose generosity and munificence we owe our all, must be the language of our hearts; and who knows not that the genuine effusions of warm and grateful spirits are incapable of disguise? The gospel in particular, from which our text is taken, abounds in descriptions of which none but the most delicate and enlightened minds are capable. The writer's genius, naturally strong and poetical, every where softens, and rises, and warms, with the sub-



## 6 DISCOURSE I.

ject: those obvious and striking circumstances, which the vulgar neither see nor feel, uniformly bear on his view, rouse his sensibility, and shed a softness the most tender and captivating through his whole narration. But this singular and propitious character is still uppermost in his heart, and is the ultimate object to which all his sentiments and observations refer. With what pleasure does he catch at every opportunity of introducing the blessed Personage whose life he writes, whose portrait he draws; and when the grateful idea rises in his mind, a beautiful sublimity exalts his expression; and his elocution, like the matter of it, so inimitably simple, so charmingly divine, delights the imagination, at the same time that it warms and ravishes the heart. In describing the lowly condition, you see, in which our Saviour is first exhibited to the faith and attention of mankind, how delicate every stroke, how just every feature, how

## DISCOURSE I. 7

mail every colour! what a fine assemblage of circumstances are selected and combined, to give this new and interesting object every possible advantage!

In what remains of this discourse, I will beg leave to fix your attention on a few leading thoughts, suggested by a separate view of the several circumstances mentioned in the text. Not that these circumstances have anything extraordinary in them, apart from his extraordinary character, to which they refer; but, as descriptive of that BIRTH without which it had been better for us we never had been born, they surely merit the most serious regard.

I. SHE BROUGHT FORTH HER FIRST-BORN SON—Much about this memorable period the books of the Old Testament having been lately translated into Greek, a language almost universally understood, the promise of the

## § DISCOURSE II

MESSIAH; and the various prophecies relating to his person and kingdom, had raised the curiosity and attention of the age. The fact cannot be disputed; that an ardent desire and earnest expectation of him prevailed, at that time, all over the world; and the records of antiquity, as if preserved by a special providence, to put scepticism to the blush, bare to this day crowded with the signs of his appearing. The Genius of hostility and war, which had long alienated the affections, and embroiled the passions and interests of mankind, was banished the earth: Peace took possession of her seat, healed the dissensions she occasioned, repaired the breaches she made, and every where diffused a spirit of gentleness and love: Philosophy and literature enlightened, arts and sciences civilised the nations; mutual clemency produced mutual confidence; local prejudices abated; the social affections extended, with the know-

ledge which men acquired of one another; a good understanding became general; and a free intercourse prevailed through the whole known world: one power rose to universal empire; one supreme authority was acknowledged; the laws, the manners, the spirit of the people was almost every where the same. Such a beautiful disposition of circumstances seemed to portend some great revolution; seemed to solicit His approach, for whom so many prayers and wishes were daily preferred. Lo! the usual commotion of human affairs is suspended; and the many restless and fiery spirits who agitate the vast machine, exhausted in political intrigue and contrivances, breathe a little respite, and wait in silent concern His coming, who, they might then think, must necessarily make such a material alteration in the whole form and face of things.

The world being thus prepared for his reception, in the fullness of time



## 10 DISCOURSE I.

God sent forth his Son. To this great event all the prophets bare witness; but one, more distinctly and precisely than the rest, thus literally and minutely describes, at the same time that he foretells it. "Behold! a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel." That mankind might be eventually happy, according to the method contrived and pre-established by infinite wisdom for that purpose, the great Agent in this merciful undertaking must both suffer and obey, consequently assume a nature and condition capable of suffering and obedience. Cavil not, O man, at what thy shallow powers were never intended to unravel. Do we not daily admit and recognise the reality of a thousand things, the essence of which is impenetrable to human view? Indeed, the fact, however new, however extraordinary, however incomprehensible, must be received if affirmed. Nothing is impossible with

## DISCOURSE I. 11

God; and where is he who dares contradict that word which cannot but be true? The laws of nature are insuperable only to those for whom they were made. Most certainly the great Lord of Nature can supersede them, when, and where, and how he pleaseth; can do whatsoever seemeth good in his sight, altogether independent of means. How contracted then, how contemptible their ideas of Deity, who would thus limit the operations of his power! Never was the exclamation more apposite than here: "Thy thoughts are not as our thoughts, O Lord, neither are thy ways as ours." Would you wish to understand how a SPIRIT so elevated could stoop to a nature so degraded; go first and learn, in the meanest animal that breathes, how life and matter are united: point out also the imperceptible ligaments which bind thine own body and soul together, before thou presumest to investigate a subject so infinitely superior.

II. AND WRAPPED HIM IN SWADE-  
LING CLOTHES. In this naked and  
helpless situation one and all of us make  
our first appearance on the stage of  
humanity; nor, in truth, does the figure  
which the best of us afterwards make in  
the world, require a much more pompous  
introduction: For, what is life, with  
all the distinctions which the partial  
hand of Fortune can lavish on her  
greatest favorites, but a state of uni-  
form slavery and dependence? Speak, ye  
who ride on the high places of the earth,  
who have got to the summit of your  
wishes, do ye meet with no inconveni-  
ences, no mortifications, no obstruc-  
tions? Is not the sphere of our actions  
exceedingly narrow and circumscribed?  
In bondage to a thousand opposite and  
conflicting propensities, what single  
thing can we do without pain? There  
is no virtue but in struggling with appe-  
tite and passion, and vice is an open  
attack on reason and conscience. Do

# DISCOURSE I. 3.

we not owe every blessing we enjoy, in a great measure, to the various creatures and circumstances round us? inasmuch, perhaps, that the most opulent and powerful, are never more dependent on others, than when they fancy themselves least obliged to them.

But might not he who took one extraordinary step also take another, and elude the infirmities, as well as the pollution, of the nature he adopted? Surely it becomes not us to prescribe for God. Shall the creature of a day ask the great Sovereign of eternity, What dost thou? Is there an instance of motion, a particle of matter, a blade of grass, with which we are thoroughly acquainted? And with what confidence can we murmur at every difficulty in the moral, to whom the smallest parts in the material system are still so inexplicable? Recall the question once and again: rash decisions are seldom fair, attack on reason and conscience. Do



never conclusive. View it with all the freedom and avidity of philosophical enquiry, if you will; but you cannot view it calmly without acknowledging that such evident and conspicuous signatures of dignity and wisdom, as mark this peculiarity of the mediatorial plan, must have struck us, though the spirit of inspiration had not expressly declared, that "in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, sin only excepted."

Let us then turn our wondering eyes to the distressful, but happy situation of the Virgin Mother: for, what may we not suppose were now the joyful yearnings and sensibilities of her pious and maternal heart, from the precious load she bore in her arms! With what pleasant sensations would every word of the heavenly message now rise in her grateful remembrance! How gladly would she recall the sympathetic salutation of her

## DISCOURSE II 15

kind woman, <sup>or</sup> Blessed art thou among  
 women, and blessed is the fruit of thy  
 womb! How naturally congratulate  
 herself on the honour done her sex, and  
 the distinction to which she is exalted  
 among them, by this memorable and  
 miraculous event! For this is I, and  
 wrapped as he is in swaddling clothes,  
 whom the Father hath appointed heir of  
 all things; by whom also he made the  
 world. Did not the Father of the Pa-  
 triarchs see his day at a distance, and  
 rejoice? Was he not the hope and con-  
 solation of Israel for many generations?  
 To usher him on the theatre of mortality  
 with becoming splendour, behold the  
 Jewish polity erected, and suspended  
 or upheld, in the face of an astonished  
 world, by the visible administration of  
 an extraordinary providence! View his  
 dignity and operations in the exercise  
 of that high and exalted office to which  
 he is ordained! On his unfailing arm  
 the vast and living fabric of creation

## 16 DISCOURSE I.

rests. What a horrible combination of rebellious spirits did he not tumble from their thrones in heaven—does he not still rule in the infernal regions with a rod of iron! See him at the Father's right hand, superintending principalities and powers, in full possession of universal might and dominion! The winds and waves obey his voice; and to him Nature and Nature's works move onward in everlasting homage. He was the first who stepped forth from the abyss of eternity, gave birth to time, and set the intire system of existence in motion; and by his final sentence shall the whole complicated drama be concluded.— Yet there he lies! dandled on the knee, suckled by the breast, cherished and caressed, as helpless and feeble as any other infant: for, oh! how dark and impenetrable that cloud which shrouds his inherent glories, before whom the heavenly host cast down their crowns, in whose presence angels veil their faces!

## DISCOURSE I. 17

Now the invisible things of God are made visible; and mortals gaze, some with stupefaction, and some with familiar delight, on all the beauties of immortal excellence. Well may the children of men receive the declaration with rapture, He who in the beginning was with God, is henceforth bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh—And is he not ashamed to call us brethren? Then is human nature ennobled indeed; then is he able to give a ransom to God; then the redemption of our souls, though precious, shall not cease for ever.

### III. AND LAID HIM IN A MANGER.

—Where now his illustrious and royal descent? Patriarchs, prophets, heroes, philosophers, kings, and conquerors, crowd his sacred genealogy: yet all his lineal dignity and glories afford him but a stable for a chamber, but a manger for a bed of state. Indeed, high birth, without either proportionable wealth, or



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## 18 DISCOURSE II.

proportionable worth, is almost good for nothing; and it matters not how we come into the world, provided we act our part well when in it: for, be our progenitors what we will, we shall meet with but a sorry reception from mankind, apart from those circumstances which gratify their pride, and interest their selfishness. His royal pedigree who came to save the world, supported as it was by the most dignified manners, the purest morals, and the best understanding, that ever met in a human character, did not, however, secure him from the deepest contempt. For shame, ye venerable tribes! that, with all your national prejudices and wealth, the sole surviving branch of your ancient kings should be thus reduced to the lowest verge of indigence! But what the dignity of his ancestors, compared with his own? Surely his merits need no additional circumstance to enhance them. How astonishing then his condescension!

## DISCOURSE I. 19

How vast his transition, from the bosom of Divinity, to a station with the herds in the STALL! How wonderful the union of so much majesty and so much meanness! How cordial the harmony between the sublimest dignity and the purest innocence! How picturesque the contrast between the fullness of the Godhead and the simplicity of a babe! “For in him,” says an Apostle, “dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” But who knows not that every idea of locality is inadequate to God? With respect to him there is neither change of place nor time. Humility, being a relative term, must therefore refer to finite—cannot possibly refer to infinite greatness: thus it is, however, the scriptures speak, because, perhaps, we could not otherwise understand them.

IV. BECAUSE THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR THEM IN THE INN—is the account which the sacred Historian gives of the



## 20 DISCOURSE II

fact he relates. "When God bringeth  
 "the First-begotten into the world, he  
 "saith, And let all the angels of God  
 "worship him." Wonderful are the  
 circumstances that preceded, and won-  
 derful the manner of his conception!  
 A celestial minister is commissioned and  
 dispatched from the court of Heaven,  
 to announce his approach: Multitudes  
 of the heavenly hosts leave their empy-  
 real seats, embrace the stillness of the  
 night, and grace the solemn occasion  
 with songs of triumphant melody:  
 Philosophers forego their speculations,  
 come from the native haunts of Ge-  
 nius and Science, and do voluntary  
 homage to the infant King. Both the  
 time and place of his nativity are equally  
 notified for that purpose, by an uncom-  
 mon phænomenon in the air. Mark  
 now the attention of a wondering world  
 to Heaven's Ambassador extraordinary!  
 Whither shall we look for this illustrious  
 guest? Where shall we find the place of

his birth? From whom shall he meet a proper reception? What external trappings can equal his internal worth, whom Heaven points out with a miracle? The most despicable things in appearance Providence often appropriates for accomplishing the counsels of God. It is not in Rome, the seat of universal empire, but the paltry province of Judea, where the Captain of Salvation first erects his standard. Shall Jerusalem then, so famous for her privileges and her crimes, have the singular honour of ushering into the world the Saviour of it? Rather search among the neighbouring villages for one more solitary and deserted than another. “But thou, “Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou art “little among the thousands of Judah, “yet out of thee shall He come forth “unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel; “whose goings-forth have been of old “from everlasting.” Mark the meanest and most pitiful cottage in Bethlehem!

THERE the little harmless, heavenly stranger is born; nor is this the only instance of the HUT's being more sanctified than the HALL, or of Religion's exchanging Society, with all her charms, for the lonely haunts of Solitude.

Perhaps the holy Parents had not wherewithal to purchase suitable accommodation: and who knows not that Modesty would rather pass unnoticed than raise an uproar? Little minds are always fondest of a bustle, and for that reason the most restless and forward to bolt on public view: devoid of those feelings which lay an everlasting restraint on petulance and presumption, they step forth without thought, and perk their folly in every face without a blush. Mean while the humble and diffident, though in general most worthy, if they can but do good, are satisfied to live unseen. Doubtless these ancient publicans, like many of their modern

successors in the same tumultuous traffic,  
 were now too much occupied to hear  
 the most urgent necessities of the indi-  
 gent and needy. Trust me, Charity  
 seldom increases with trade: it is not  
 the nature of man to soften as his cir-  
 cumstances mend. No: Prosperity never  
 intoxicates the head without hardening  
 the heart; nor was it here alone that  
 Wealth has procured respect where Merit  
 could not. There are few situations,  
 and fewer characters in life, in which  
 Interest gets not the start of every other  
 feeling; and for one who will gene-  
 rously, unconnected, unsolicited, with  
 equal courage and humanity, stretch out  
 his hand to the friendless, thousands  
 and tens of thousands daily chime in at  
 random with the partial tone of a rash,  
 misjudging world. Nay, if at any  
 time Merit is more favourably received  
 than another, 'tis odds but Malevolence  
 and Envy, those hereditary fiends of  
 human happiness, spring a new mine,



## 24 DISCOURSE I.

and blast her success: for Prosperity never smiles on the well-deserving, but there are creatures in abundance little enough to insult and upbraid her.

Blame not then the Bethlehemites with ingratitude, for a practice so common among ourselves. Their punishment was certainly equal to their crime; for they lost the honour of welcoming an infant Saviour with proper tokens of respect; an honour which never was, which never can be, in the power of any but themselves. What a tacit reflection, by the way, on them, on us, on all the children of men, that the very BEASTS we often use with so little mercy should be his first HOSTS who came to show us so much! And was not the neglect he met with on this occasion an indication sufficiently striking, that his religion, like himself, should be still despised and rejected of men?

## DISCOURSE I. 25

How loudly are we challenged, by these particulars, to mark the operations of providence—to decide with caution—wherever character is concerned—to moderate our expectations of life—to think with reverence of the divine conduct—to undervalue the little preferences of the world!

—Most minds seem to have no thought at all: they take every thing as it comes, live with indifference, and die in stupidity. Others, to whom the regular uniformity, which marks the various operations and revolutions of universal nature, is become familiar, habitually attribute the whole to CHANCE: the most striking indications of mercy and judgment neither awaken their gratitude, nor alarm their fears. Nothing certainly could be more rousing than the wonderful arrangement of things that preceded the birth of our Saviour; yet the state of the world was as little

## 26 DISCOURSE I.

remarked then as it is now. A few inquisitive abstracted spirits might ruminate in the SHADE: the Politicians of the age, with their usual airs of importance, would naturally pique themselves on the success of their schemes; the conquerors enjoy their triumphs with avidity, and the people possess their privileges in quietness: but they saw not the whole in connection with the great plan of providence; the hand from which this beautiful modulation took its form continued unseen; and the multitudes of heroes which graced that period, like so many PUPPETS on a spring, acted their several parts without once recognizing the invisible power that impelled them.—What an awful stupefaction has seized the human race in every nation and age! There is not a sensation of our hearts, or a faculty of our souls, which is not constantly addressed in the simplest, sweetest, most persuasive accents. Whatever happens in life has a meaning, has

## DISCOURSE I. 29

a language, which it is our business, our interest, to understand. To what purpose are we placed here, but that we may grow wiser and better? And is not every appearance of Providence, as well as every object in Nature, appropriated by Heaven for our direction and comfort? These are the means, by which an all-propitious and ever-present DIVINITY corresponds with creatures incapable, as yet, of a more spiritual mode of communication. Every occurrence in the natural and moral world, every blast of wind, every ray of light, every grain of sand, as well as every living thing, the smallest atom, as well as the largest planet, proclaims aloud the will of God; and we act then only in our proper sphere, when our minds are on the stretch for this heavenly intelligence.

In our present complicated and dependent state, the knowledge of one another is essential, in some measure at least, to our comfort; and Nature, by mixing



## 23 DISCOURSE I.

in every temper a certain dash of curiosity, and rendering the motions of the most deceitful hearts obvious to a certain degree, appears not a little attentive to this particular. But then, as if poisoned with acrimony in the very womb, the first language we speak, is the language of censure: we examine, only to find fault; and, with all the wantonness of ill-nature, grasp at whatever will bear the worst interpretation. This is one of our many vicious excrescences, which religion is intended to suppress. Both in the material and animal creation we are daily mistaking a thousand things, by judging prematurely. Give the plant time to rife, and you shall then see to what genus it belongs. All subjects whatever must be in a state of maturity, before their respective properties can become marks of true discrimination. Man is such a fluctuating thing, so apt to differ from himself by the change of time or place, that we can never speak

# DISCOURSE I. 29

of Him with too much diffidence; and our ideas of the plainest character, even after a considerable share of previous acquaintance, and formed with all the precision and delicacy we can, are seldom just: much less is a rash judgment to be depended on. The emissaries of Detraction have been infamous and execrable from the beginning of the world: flagrant immoralities burst on life with too much violence not to be felt; but the imbecillities of humanity, of which the best, because least cautious, have generally the greatest share, need all the exaggeration of this lying fraternity to make them sufficiently observable. How coy is the world to admit the least exception to the peculiar modes it adopts, in favour of a few that despise them! and yet who knows not, who grants not, in so many words, that the natural and innocent eccentricity of a warm heart is not to be circumscribed by the cold suggestions of art and design? Are not

# 30 DISCOURSE II.

many susceptible, in the Highest degree, of every moral and religious obligation, who, notwithstanding, have it not somehow in their power to do any thing like others? When the little inadvertencies of such superior and sublime spirits as these are blown into crimes by bursts of envy, why does not every honest man stand forth in defence of bleeding innocence? What happens now to some poor unlucky, friendless wretch, whose greatest fault probably is an honest and independent mind, may plunge you to-morrow in the same misfortunes; for the wicked are every where in close combination against the good.—How got you this information?—Are you impartial enough to do both sides justice?—Did these things, which you think so culpable, happen under your own eye? or, Had you them only by the malicious whispers of some idle, officious, ill-natured fool?—Was he under no temptation to misrepresent the circumstances

## DISCOURSE II 31

of the case?—Have you examined these with a candid and dispassionate temper, and made all the allowances which, thus situated, you could wish for yourselves?—are questions which, seasonably put, and accompanied with certain gestures and tones, might quash every blast of calumny that blows. First conceptions of whatever we see imperfectly, must be uniformly wrong. How emphatically true is this remark of the instance in the text! Was it likely, to judge by the common course of things, that the Babe of Bethlehem, so weak, so abject, so obscure, should, notwithstanding, be the Son of God, and the Prince of the kings of the earth; the Saviour, Governor, Judge of the world? Distrust every suspicious appearance, and give every favourable circumstance its fullest weight and credit. We are not always called to speak out, and much better offer no opinion at all than a bad one. Things often strike according to the temper in



which, or the medium through which, they are seen; and we are frequently peevish enough to charge an object with the defect of the eye that beholds it. Action can never be thoroughly understood, apart from circumstances; and the plausibility with which the greatest vices are sometimes defended, is an awful and everlasting caution against pronouncing rashly in dark and suspicious cases. Almost all the mischiefs that embroil society, and make life so insupportable and dreary to the wretched, arise from this quarter. Father of Humanity! how many of the tenderest and sweetest spirits that animate a mortal form may, at this very moment, be groaning out their souls in despair; may be wasting in the pale embraces of penury, obscurity, and guilt; whom the harshness of the world has plunged into crimes which they know can never be forgiven! How long shall the sensibility of the sex be abused in that very

## DISCOURSE I. 33

bosom which nature points out to them  
 as an asylum from every wrong ! How  
 long shall female INNOCENCE, with all  
 her lovely smiling circle of attractions  
 and graces, be the victim of unrelenting  
 and triumphant villainy ! How long  
 shall that vengeance sleep, which vices  
 so atrocious provoke ! Ye favourites of  
 Prosperity, whom fortune or friends  
 have raised above the exigencies of a  
 dependent state ! while you roll at ease  
 in the CAR of Popularity ; while wealth  
 caresses, and flattery soothes ; are ye little  
 enough to catch at one unmanly advan-  
 tage of those beneath you ? It is not ge-  
 nerous, it is not handsome---Is it not  
 infamously mean to attack a timid,  
 trembling, defenceless creature, on such  
 unequal terms ? Least of all, let your  
 influence circulate to the prejudice of  
 the helpless ; think, oh ! think, how  
 much the happiness of thousands depends  
 on your estimation ; that one kind look,  
 one approving smile, one good-natured

word, may do infinite good to many a worthy heart; and that every appearance of coldness to inferiors or equals, only not so lucky in the mean time as you are, may raise and disseminate such a spirit of detraction as shall not cease for life; and wound depressed sensibility so deeply, that no after-comfort shall be able to cure.

—DISAPPOINTMENT is one of the bitterest draughts that Adversity, in her roughest form, presents to human kind: but, if we inspect with accuracy our past feelings, we shall find, that whatever shocks in this offensive cup, is entirely of our own composing; for the fugitive enjoyments of sense derive all their value from our foolish attachments, all their lustre from our extravagant imaginations, all their attractions from our inordinate desires. The mind of man has a strange, but strong propensity to self-deception. The Lover, the Hero, the Enthusiast,

are all apparent proofs that he is happy only in proportion as he indulges the most romantic expectations. Fancy perhaps, in compensation for the many vagrant dances she leads us, purposely embroiders the scenes of futurity to divert our thoughts from settling too deeply on those of the present; for, the moment one phantom disappears, another starts up in a new form, and is not the less specious and flattering for being at a distance. These are the enchantments which render the first stages of life so endearing; the magic which hangs about our early years, and gives the heart so many different palpitations, that we can neither enjoy them without uneasiness, nor quit them without regret. Past times and past scenes are consequently recollected with a pleasing tenderness and melancholy. The world we think perpetually changing for the worse: how common is the complaint, that the seasons are now less mild, the



## 36 DISCOURSE I.

sun less genial, mankind less social, and friends less kind, than formerly! The truth is, nature smiles with the same vivacity; the fields breathe the same sweetness, and the birds chaunt the same melody; but the organs of our bodies, and the tone of our minds, are no longer the same; and whatever we hear, or see, or feel, is a striking instance, how very little possession is calculated to give content. Nothing can be more sanguine than the expectations of young minds, when their eyes first open on the world: how eagerly do their fond apprehensions swell, and magnify every petty circumstance that can bear a mild and flattering construction! They launch out in the great ocean of life with a fair and promising gale; but little imagine how soon they may find themselves far from shore, as on the bosom of a boundless sea, in a dead calm. How uniformly do our largest and best-built hopes languish and die with experience! Does

not every succeeding vicissitude, through which we pass, in our voyage to eternity, limit and diminish them? and can any thing so precarious and uncertain excite anxiety or solicitude? Behold! an illustrious line of the highest ancestry, in His case who had a better title to indulgence than ever man had, yet softens not one circumstance in his lot, administers no delicacies to his taste, procures no venal obsequiousness, bribes not hospitality to receive him. Where is he who may depend more assuredly on engrossing public notice, on possessing the public countenance? And yet, with parts so eminently superior to the highest birth, did He experience the contrary. And what can we expect? The boons of fortune, though within our reach, are much too vexatious and fluctuating to set our hearts at rest; and the best way, after all the receipts a fastidious taste can devise, to preserve our spirits, is to moderate our desires. Live above the

# 38 DISCOURSE II

world, and the world cannot affect you. A fullen abstraction from the scenes she exhibits, is indeed no proper superiority to the spirit she breathes; but still, the fewer excitements you have to ambition, you will live in the greater tranquillity, and probably die in the greater peace; and what would the most covetous have more, than a happy life and a comfortable death?

—It seems one invariable measure in the divine administration, to accomplish the greatest ends by the most inconsiderable means. This idea recurring perpetually, as it must do, to an attentive mind, is a very striking, and often a confounding one. The operations of Art are so familiar to us, that we can hardly think in another track, seldom about those of Nature, without stating the comparison; and our conceptions of the former are insensibly appropriated in most of our ideas, in all our descriptions,

of the latter. We never, or but rarely, recollect, that the fitness of material causes is applicable only to finite, absolutely incompatible with infinite AGENCY; and that, however much human success depends on the propriety of instrumental means, the will of the SUPREME, throughout the whole Empire of Creation, is every where alike independent and immediate. That the little child JESUS, in the meanest accommodation that life could afford, as weak and mortal as others, connected with indigence and dependence, and taking his birth from this obscure corner of the world, should yet, like a new Sun in the meridian of Heaven, dart on the universe with such astonishing magnificence as he did, may set little minds gazing, but is an event which the more liberal will easily see to be still in the order of Nature. Are not all sorts of life supported by proper aliment? Are not all our powers of body and mind



## 40 DISCOURSE I.

improved by suitable exercise? And are not these, with innumerable instances of a similar kind, all just as mysterious and inexplicable to us, as that the perfection of human nature should be restored, and the moral state of things set to rights, by one born in meanness, and reared in obscurity? The time is at hand when we shall wonder at nothing. Incredulity alone fills our heads with scepticism, and our hearts with hesitation; but the moment we see and recognise an ever-present God, wherever we cast our eyes, his omnipotent and universal energy will furnish an immediate and full solution of all our doubts and difficulties.

—Perhaps nothing produces greater infelicities to elegant and masterly spirits, than the little preferences of the world. The most lasting and exquisite sensibilities, both of suffering and enjoyment, are to be found among this class of men. Their lot is seldom a prosperous

## DISCOURSE I 41

or splendid one, because the arts and assiduities which lead to affluence and power require a flexibility which they have not; sometimes, a meanness which they think beneath them. Their minds naturally brood on the caprices of life; and the blind insensibility, which seems to confederate the whole world in one black, indissoluble combination against merit, is an idea which haunts them like a ghost. Ye generous Few! who, to compensate the want of wealth, have yet warm affections and feeling hearts, were any of you now hearing me, I would tell you, in the language of true condolence—how much I sympathise, how gladly I could mingle my tears with yours: I would tell you—that to you the heavenly and soothing voice of Religion whispers the softest, kindest, sweetest things: I would tell you—that delicacy and simplicity of mind, however tarnished and clouded here by mere exterior meanness, shall shine hereafter with everlasting and distinguished lustre.

## 42 DISCOURSE I.

Think on that heavenly Personage who deserved so much, yet had so little. All the chambers and beds of the HALL were crouded with guests, in every thing, in every sense, much more beneath him than the lowest reptiles are beneath you; while He, for whose reception no place, but the FATHER'S BOSOM, is sufficiently worthy—LIES in a MANGER. THERE! look THERE, O my soul! and perish within me every earthly desire, every growling complaint. Who would expect, I will say, at the risque of a sneer, who would wish to be regarded where he was not? Yet, hostile as the world is, you may haply meet with many, in whose soothing attention you will find some satisfaction. Beware, however, of drawing too largely on that fund! There are not wanting who will give you abundant marks of kindness; be wonderfully solicitous to please you; lament, in a thousand forms; their incapacity to do you an essential service; and lavish a world of sighs and

wishes in your behalf. Now Providence opens a door, puts it in their power to show the sincerity of their professions; and, secure of their friendship, hope gladdens your heart, and the tear of joy, for the first time perhaps, glistens in your eye; when, lo! a chilling thought comes across them, blots you from their remembrance, and some silly, simpering, smooth-faced creature is preferred! If you let loose the indignant, but unavoidable feelings of an honest mind, on this occasion, the cry is raised against you; every body upbraids you with imprudence; and you are taught to understand, at last, that all men are entitled to an exclusive judgment in the management of their own affairs; just as if the attachments of the heart were matters of mere mercenary traffic. Do ye surprise the best, in this respect, sometimes on a level with the most worthless? Has it been so from the beginning, and will it not be so to the end of time? Are not places of profit and preferment



## A DISCOURSE II

every where so full of the bad, that there seldom is, seldom can be, room for the good? And should the loss of objects so paltry and perishing give you one moment's concern? Is not every faculty of your souls, is not every sentiment of your minds, braced and roused indignant at the thought? For shame, that conceptions so exalted should stoop so low! No traveller despises agreeable accommodations where he finds them; but fools only fume and chafe where they find them not. In yonder worlds, where the selfish and interested system of this has no place, you may well promise yourself every blessing, and dread no disappointment.— Away!—This is not your home. Distinctions purely exterior were not made for you, nor you for them. Loiter not in the porch, to be the scorn and contempt of slaves, while the master beckons thee from within. Seest thou not Him, whom every inconvenience and hardship in life conspired to crush, at the

head of God's universal kingdom, above the rage of Earth and Hell, living in glory, and reigning triumphant? The track he explored is open also to you; and have you not the same hopes, and the same assistance, that he had? You cannot say his beginning was more promising than yours; and he now waits your arrival where he is, that he may show you the difference between his treatment here, and your treatment there. In that climate of immortal and universal perfection, your enlightened and sympathetic minds shall see and feel more in one hour than will repay a whole age of suffering. Dismiss for the present all your petty murmurings—suspend every little carnal concern. A few moments may throw you on the bosom of an ETERNITY, as full of bliss, at least, as the heart is of wishes; and, oh! how the earth dwindles, and sinks, and dies into nothing, when full and fresh hopes of Heaven burst on the mind! AMEN.

level of God's universal kingdom, above  
 the stage of Earth and Hell, living in  
 glory, and reigning triumphantly. The  
 track he explored is open also to you,  
 and have you not the same hopes, and  
 the same assurance, that he had? You  
 cannot say the happening was such pro-  
 mising things, and he is now waiting  
 your arrival, which he is bound to do.  
 Show you the difference between his  
 treatment here and your treatment there.  
 In that climate of immortal and univer-  
 sal THE BIRTH OF CHRIST and  
 sympathetic minds shall see and feel more  
 in one hour than will repay a whole  
 age of suffering. I believe in the pro-  
 fect all your petty misanthropies—dis-  
 yand every little carnal conceit. A few  
 moments may show you on the path of  
 an eternal joy, as full of life as death,  
 in the heart of winter, and of how  
 the earthshaking and sinking and dier  
 again nothing, when fall and fresh hopes  
 of heaven burst on the mind. Amen.

DISCOURSE II.

ON

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.



# DISCOURSE II.

On the Birth of Christ.

LUKE, II. 7.

And she brought forth her first-born Son,  
and wrapped him in swaddling clothes,  
and laid him in a manger, because there  
was no room for them in the inn.

**H**ITHERTO we have remarked  
only a few curious things on the  
history of our SAVIOUR'S BIRTH, as  
circumstantially related in the text:  
for the facts recorded in the Gospel,  
instead of being subjects of endless con-  
tentions among the various parties, into  
which Christianity is at present so un-  
happily divided, might thus be reviewed  
with advantage by all; and the more  
of life and nature, that can be ingrafted  
on this heavenly flock, the better. Schol-  
lastic theology leaves alternately for

## DISCOURSE II.

On the Birth of Christ.

LUKE, ii. 7.

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was no room for them in the inn.*

**H**ITHERTO we have remarked only a few cursory things on the history of our SAVIOUR'S BIRTH, as circumstantially related in the text: for the facts recorded in the Gospel, instead of being subjects of endless contentions among the various parties, into which Christianity is at present so unhappily divided, might thus be reviewed with advantage by all; and the more of life and nature, that can be ingrafted on this heavenly stock, the better. Scholastic THEOLOGY serves alternately for

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the retreat of Dullness, and the garb of Hypocrisy. Conjectures mislead in every thing; produce nostrums in physic, dogmas in philosophy, cant in religion, and licentiousness in life. Indeed the world has now had a pretty long trial, has made the experiment at no small expence, and may perhaps be satisfied at last, that every species of serious composition must be useless, in proportion as it runs into abstraction.

As all the parts of our Saviour's history, the most trivial and remote, as well as the more intimate and important, must have an immediate reference to the great business for which he visited our globe; the peculiar propriety and fitness of his BIRTH shall, by your leave, be the subject of this discourse. And may it not be viewed—as a suitable introduction to the character he should exhibit—as an affecting part of the example he should give—as an obvious prelude to the life he should lead?

## DISCOURSE II. 51

I. The humble circumstances, in which the Son of God made his appearance among men, affect, in a most sensible manner, all the parts of that sacred and sublime character which he sustained, as the great Reformer of the world, and sole Mediator between earth and heaven.

Could any thing be more happily contrived, to temper the dignity of his manners, than the lowliness of his mind? Is not majesty most universally amiable and acceptable in condescension? Without flexibility there can be no ease, no grace; and where these are wanting, politeness is pedantry, and dignity pride. There is as much true greatness of mind, perhaps, in stooping properly, as in soaring high. Our Saviour was so vastly superior to those whom he came to teach, that there seemed not another expedient left, by which his instructions could become intelligible.



The less we are intimidated by our teachers, the better are we qualified, and not the less inclined, to pronounce on their doctrines. Overawed by authority, the mind sinks into slavery; our mouths are shut; and we lose at once the power of thinking, and the power of utterance. How happily does the Author of our Religion disclaim every such advantage! Though uniformly modest, his greatness never forsakes him; though universally humble, he is never mean. He has nothing to conceal; for his embassy is not to a part, but to the whole; and, by thus appearing on a level with the meanest of mankind, he frankly submits his pretensions to the common sense of all.

He was, moreover, to authenticate his character and commission by a series of miracles, at once the most simple and the most sublime. For this purpose, his meanness and obscurity was the best

and most eligible method, that could be adopted. It was an easy matter for MAHOMET to spread his religion, with the ALCORAN in one hand, and the sword in the other; with blasphemies in his mouth, and an army of cut-throats at his back: for who, among the raw, unprincipled banditti that crouded his standard, would be hardy enough to dispute his claim, while they felt that their lives were in his hand, and fore-saw that either their conversion, or their necks, must give way to his power? Had the Son of David assumed, in this manner, the prowess of his forefathers, his followers had been more numerous indeed, but could not have been half so honest: for, when we see a poor man, without the assistance of a liberal education, without the countenance of the great, and without the means of bribery and corruption, do so much good with so little noise—when we see a character, so uncommonly superior,

emerging all at once from the shade, such unparalleled merit absolutely void of ostentation, the most striking and sublime perfections so happily and uniformly blended with all the softness, sweetness, and delicacy of the mildest virtues—when we see the raging elements, the fish of the sea, and the beasts of the field, devils, diseases, and death, obedient to his word; must we not say with the Centurion, that “surely this was a Son of God?”

But he came, to use the language of an Apostle, “to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,” as well as to enlighten the minds of sinners: and his death, however extraordinary, is by no means either the most wonderful event in his history, or the only sacrifice he made: for, having renounced all the allurements of life, from the beginning, with the coolness and magnanimity that he did; being so divinely

superior to the opinion and applause of the world as he was; when could death be unwelcome, or how more disagreeable to him in one shape than another? To such an innocent and independent mind, as he possessed, must not every form of it have been equally honourable, and equally indifferent? Conscious guilt, in creatures so fatally enslaved to the affections and approbation of one another, as we are, alone has introduced, and kept up, the distinction between what is thought an honourable and dishonourable exit. But say, ye Votaries of Ambition! which of you, with parts like his, could have submitted to his indigence, been as much denied to the gaudy blandishments of sense, as little in the estimation of superiors, as friendless, forlorn, and dependent as he was? Did ever superiority to the common feelings of all mankind, appear so complete and triumphant? Which of those things, to which we are most



strongly and universally attached, did he not relinquish with readiness? And what was his whole life, but an habitual SACRIFICE of all the heart holds dear? For there is not a wish, that fires the human breast, which he did not cheerfully and instantly forego, wherever the cause of God or Man interfered. Those, who occupy the higher departments of life, in all nations and ages of the world, have been tutored by Philosophy to a certain degree: but in no age or nation whatever did she ever condescend to take the least care of the vulgar; and the soul of a peasant is as precious in the sight of Heaven, as the soul of a king. The benignant Creator would have all his creatures happy; and our Saviour, by assuming humanity in its most degraded form, in a state of the severest depression, must see and feel, in the fullest and tenderest manner, into what a depth of wretchedness vice hath plunged us. Accordingly his reli-

gion has an affable and kind aspect to men of all nations, of all characters, of all conditions; and is the only institution that can boast of inspiring the mind with goodness, in her roughest, as well as in her most polished form. Subordination is indispensable to the being of society; and should those who are absolute drudges in this life, have no hopes of altering their situation for the better in another; are they not of all men the most emphatically miserable? Is not the beast that perishes, in a station preferable to theirs? But the great Parent of Nature, who hears the most secret suggestions and whisperings of their hearts, with concern hath provided for them an asylum at his own right hand; for by his command the GENIUS of the Gospel thus stoops down to their assistance, and lifts them up to Heaven.

In short, all his authority, as supreme Minister of universal Providence, is

## DISCOURSE II.

Founded in his obedience and humilication. Hence the precepts of his religion are the more equal to the condition, as well as consonant to the constitution, of human kind, that they suppose the most intimate knowledge of us in every mode of existence: for the abject state of his infant years afforded him the means of being thoroughly acquainted with all those feelings and habits, which, for want of a better education, form and govern the far greater part of mankind. So that He, who now prescribes for our conduct, and by whose unerring and unchangeable verdict we must all finally stand or fall, is not only our kinsman by blood, but our brother in every kind of difficulty; the affectionate companion, as well as the familiar guardian of our lives.

II. The abject state of an infant Saviour may be considered as a most interesting part of the glorious and hea-

## DISCOURSE II. 59

venly example which he came to set before us.

Whether the world affects us as an object of profit, pleasure, or preferment, however flattering to our wishes, it must be fatal to our well-being. There is something about us, to which no attainment within the present range of our faculties is at all adequate. In the most eligible situation you can suppose, the heart is still uneasy, and, like a lion in a toil, wrestles indignant to be free. Indeed, happiness is the growth of another clime; and thither we must go to enjoy it, for it cannot be transplanted.

We naturally, but absurdly enough imagine, that wealth would supply all our wants. Alas! so little are we acquainted with ourselves, that we hardly know how we are, much less how we should be. Every space beyond the spot we occupy, appears a paradise at a distance; but the charm breaks as we



## 60 DISCOURSE II.

approach it; and indigence is unavoidable, whatever place we prefer, whatever form we take. Indeed, we generally change with our circumstances, but never change from poverty to affluence for the better. The school of Adversity is a school of improvement; but Prosperity, like a malignant star, for the most part blasts wherever it shines. Who would not rather pity the miser's avarice, than covet his gold? Did you but see the cares that multiply with his stores;—did you but see the **AVARICE**, which, like a vulture, in proportion as he feeds it, preys at his heart;—did you but see how keenly his little abject mind labours, in accumulating its own destruction; you would not so much wonder to find him always out of humour, as that he could still bear to live.

The pursuit of Illicit Pleasure is a slavery which no liberal and manly

## DISCOURSE II. 61

spirit can bear ; is satisfactory to no man who enjoys the right use of his reason ; but to all else the charms of this for-  
 ceress are irresistible ; for a heated ima-  
 gination gives a colouring to every thing. What now are the sentiments of a young heart, on her first appearance ?  
 Why, her countenance blooms with health, her eyes sparkle with gaiety, and in her hand is a cup of joy, full and overflowing. But cast your eyes, O young man, a little beyond the magic circle that surrounds her ; how many plagues and sorrows, disappointments and pangs, tremble in her train ! Though your present delirium may vitiate your taste for a time ; when the fever subsides, and it cannot outlive the appetite that produced it ; when you awake from this intoxicating dream, how will you be able to support your own thoughts ? Could you continue your debaucheries, without impairing either your constitu-  
 tion or estate ; is your dreadful waste of

## 62 DISCOURSE II.

time, and dreadful waste of soul, to be made up by the indulgence of a moment? May you not fix the bias of your heart, beyond a possibility of change? May not desires spring up, which you are no longer able either to gratify, or subdue? May you not fall a victim at last to those very feelings, which you were all your life long most solicitous to pamper?

Nor are they one whit better acquainted with the workings of their own hearts, who expect from Ambition what pleasure cannot afford them; for, after reaching the very top of the wishes they set out with, another, and another, and another object of desire peeps up behind, towering still higher and higher, till their intoxicated imaginations are lost in the clouds. But they seldom suspect, never 'till it is too late, that the nearer heaven they are in this respect, the farther are they from

## DISCOURSE III 63

God: for pride, like every other predominant passion, swells in proportion as the means of it accumulate; inso-  
much that he who should gain the whole world, would be so far from enjoying the conquest with satisfaction, that, like the Macedonian of old, he would probably sit down disappointed, and deplore his hard fate, that there was not another to engage his pursuit: for what, within the verge of nature, can either circumscribe or suppress the incessant cravings of that heart, which is drunk with the lust of power?

Such, and so little adapted to the great end in view, are the various objects of our pursuit: nor is it possible to dispose of our affections more worthily, till this fatal attachment is destroyed. Some great and commanding example is therefore necessary, to put the world to rights in a matter so essential to their happiness: and what greater,



## 64 DISCOURSE III

what more commanding, than the living and familiar example of the most amiable and unblemished perfection? Often have we been told by the prophets and philosophers of old times, that all temporary things are, at best, in the long-run, but vanity and vexation of spirit. What a full and forcible demonstration of this momentous and mortifying truth, is afforded us in the history of the greatest and best Man, that ever dignified the human name! Behold! He is born, he lives, he dies, in circumstances uniformly mean and abject. He had no delight in the delicacies of sense, but industry was sanctified with his presence; he felt not the fascination of riches, but poverty was his by inheritance; he affected not the distinctions of pride, but consecrated humility for his temple. Never were the profits of the world so insignificant, never were the allurements of the world so tasteless, never were the honours of

the world so uninviting, as to him. And may not his intire and sovereign contempt of every sensual and temporary attachment well show us, how little those things are in the estimation of heaven, which are commonly so much over-rated in that of the world? Look nature and society throughout: can you say, the most worthy are always the most wealthy? Would it not rather seem, that earthly enjoyments are of too small account, in the sight of God, to be appropriated solely for his friends? Had they been any tokens at all of his regard, should not that person have possessed them most, whom he loved best? In short, there is this one great lesson, which we ought to learn from all the dispensations of God, "that nothing, apart from our moral and religious improvement, can possibly share his approbation."

III. Let me beg of you to observe, in the last place, that the humble circumstances of the Saviour's birth may, in like manner, be viewed as an obvious prelude to the life he should lead.

Whatever the foreboding anxieties of his parents might be, on this occasion, in proportion as they conceived rightly of his character, they could not but be somewhat apprehensive about his reception. Most probably his infancy, childhood, and youth, were not without many striking indications, that he should indeed be very great, but that his greatness was not to be of this world. Full thirty years of his precious life, being spent in the little lonely village of Nazareth, were consequently sunk in the stillest obscurity. He was ushered on public view, however, with every pompous and solemn circumstance, which could either beget or command attention. An extraordinary Harbinger, fore-

told in ancient prophecy, and brought into existence by a miracle, prepares his way, and proclaims his approach. Lo! the heavens open, and publicly announce his dignity. While the Spirit is seen hovering over his head in the likeness of a dove, a voice is heard and recognised, as from the immediate presence of God, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

Would not one expect now, from these and many other promising prefiges of his future greatness, to see him received by a listening world with a silent, but respectful admiration and gratitude? How important the discoveries he makes! How urgent the message he delivers! How precious the blessings he bestows! And, oh! how transcendent the honour he confers on our common nature! He comes from the Great Majesty of the universe, to



## 68 DISCOURSE II.

a rebellious world, not in terms of terror and defiance, but of love and reconciliation; and all his overtures are overtures of the purest and tenderest mercy. His life is a striking transcript of his heart; a beautiful and just comment on those interesting doctrines of moral and eternal truth, which are, moreover, attested and confirmed by a series of miracles, equally benignant to the bodies and souls of men. Never was an example so heavenly as that he gave, never were words so gracious as those he spake, never were deeds so glorious as those he did.

Yet, notwithstanding the incomparable greatness of his mind, and the unexampled goodness of his heart, "men hid, as it were, their faces from him." He was born under a cloud, which literally gathering strength, grew blacker and blacker from every succeeding incident of his life. Ask not in

## DISCOURSE II. 69

what palace he resided, what empire he ruled, what treasures he possessed, what equipage he kept, what guards attended him, and what princes mingled in his retinue?—He made the world, but had not where to lay his head—He feeds all by his bounty, yet was fed by the bounty of others—He sways the sceptre of universal authority, and yet was subjected to a tax—He calls the silver and gold his own, yet a fish supplied him with money—Angels minister to his necessities, yet he submits to the contradiction of sinners.—Great God! how selfish and despicable must not that world be, in which the whole weight of heaven could not render the most virtuous poverty respectable!

Surely Philosophy was never so much out in her reckoning, as when she was made to suppose, that Goodness, to be worshipped, needs only to be seen. Well may human nature blush; but the fact

## 50 DISCOURSE IN

cannot be concealed, that the most amiable object, ever beheld among mortals, was the worst used, the most universally disliked: so that it should seem, the many heroic virtues, that made such a noise in the world, owed much of their prosperity, and still owe much of their reputation, to the vices which kept them in countenance.

Not satisfied with traducing the amiable and blessed character of this inoffensive and benevolent PERSONAGE; not satisfied with rejecting his heavenly doctrines; not satisfied with blaspheming his propitious miracles; they even thirst for his blood: their malice keeps pace with his benignity, and hell rages in proportion as heaven smiles.—See them all inflamed; and, with more than ordinary rancour, gathering round the meek, and innocent, and unresisting Lamb of God!—See them, at one time, with unhallowed hands lifted up to stone Him,

## DISCOURSE II. 71

who literally went about doing good!—  
See them, at another, dragging him to  
the brink of a precipice, with the vini-  
pious intention of throwing him down!  
Never, surely, were the fiends of in-  
gratitude so fully satiated, as by the  
behaviour of sinners to their Saviour in  
the days of his flesh; unless, perhaps,  
by the reception he still meets with from  
them in the dispensation of his Gospel.

— Shall we follow him from the cradle  
to the grave? How suitable his entrance  
on the stage, to the exit he makes!—the  
humility of his birth, to the ignominy  
of his death! What is the GARDEN,  
but an introduction to the CROSS?  
There the terrible conflict begins;  
which shall here be finished. Behold  
him prostrate, and stretched out at full  
length, on the ground, as if pressed  
down and sinking under the weight of  
his incumbent wo! “His heart melts,  
“like wax, in the midst of his bowels,”



## 72 DISCOURSE III

and a fearful and bloody sweat over-  
 spreads his sacred body!—What sighs are  
 these breaking from his labouring breast!  
 —What words are these bursting from  
 his holy lips!—Hear the cries he utters—  
 mark the tears he sheds, and sheds for  
 us! What, O heavenly Saviour, could  
 thus agitate thy guiltless frame? Was  
 it the cruelty of thy enemies, the per-  
 fidy of thy friends, the prospect of death,  
 or the pain and scandal of the cross?  
 How many martyrs in thy cause, in-  
 spired by thy spirit, fortified by thy  
 strength, have braved every terror, and  
 triumphed sometimes in the fiercest  
 flames! But, oh! how different the  
 smiles of a present Deity, and the hor-  
 rors that accompany his absence! What  
 is Heaven, but the light of his counte-  
 nance? What is Hell, but the hiding  
 of his face? With what deliberate satisfaction do  
 they still persevere in their cruelties!

# DISCOURSE III. 73

The purple robe, the sceptre of reed, the crown of thorns, what horrible marks of barbarity! Their manners, less polished than the blunt and rugged iron which pierce his hands and feet, shock his mild and delicate mind with savage rudeness. Even in the extremity of suffering, no assistance at all is near him; no tender hand to bind up his bleeding wounds; no alleviating draught in his cup of trembling; no sympathising friend to soothe his disconsolate spirits. Well might he exclaim in the plaintive strain of sacred poetry, "I have trod the wine-press ALONE, and of the people there was none with me—But, O my God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"—Their absence I could bear, for what is the absence of the whole creation to me, whilst Thou art present? but in thy absence all nature is black and horrible; my soul is inconsolable, and I must complain.

Say now, ye scoffers ! why are the beams of yonder sun withdrawn ?—why shake the pillars of the world ?—what mighty shock disturbs the repose of the dead, splits the flinty rocks, rends the vail of the temple, and staggers the stoutest heart ? Lift up your eyes to Calvary ! Lo ! Nature, all Nature, in agonies with her suffering Lord ! Man only feels not the wonderful sympathy, which affects the whole frame of things — Man only remains unconcerned in a catastrophe, which his crimes occasion — Man only is active in a DEED, which the earth cannot bear without horror, which the heavens cannot witness without blushing.

Here then let us pause a moment, and consider the practical side of the subject ; how it is calculated to affect us ; in what manner it should interest our hearts, and influence our lives.

Tell me now, Is not every thing you  
 have heard about the Redeemer of the  
 world—wonderfully expressive; a most  
 substantial proof of his friendship for  
 human kind? How deeply affecting  
 that generous concern which animated  
 his whole deportment, in behalf of our  
 best and most lasting interests! Did he  
 not see our wretchedness in its utmost  
 extent? Did he not flee to our deliver-  
 ance with unconquerable rapidity? Did  
 he not quench the fury that flashed  
 indignation and wrath in our face? Did  
 he not open the gates of immortality  
 that were bolted against us? And this,  
 all this, has he not accomplished with  
 an ardor which no obstacle could relax,  
 with a generosity unprecedented on  
 earth, with a grace and benignity su-  
 preme? Say ye, who, possessed of  
 warm and feeling hearts, are fired with  
 the recital of great and magnanimous  
 actions, is there not something HERE,  
 which darkens and diminishes whatever



sheds a lustre on the annals of mankind?  
 Yes; the cause he espoused, the felicity  
 he laid aside, the nature he assumed,  
 the birth he preferred, the deeds he  
 performed, the contempt he bore, the  
 sorrows he knew, the shame he suffered,  
 the pangs he felt, the life he led, and  
 the death he died, are instances of  
 greatness and benignity, to which there  
 is no parallel in human story: for,  
 O how different the Father's bosom and  
 a bleak inhospitable world; the gratu-  
 lations of angels and the insults of  
 sinners; a crown of glory and a crown  
 of thorns, a heavenly throne and an  
 ignominious cross! Trace him through  
 every step of his humiliation, from the  
 first moment he attracted the notice of  
 mortals, till a cloud received him out  
 of their sight; and ask your own hearts,  
 Was ever love, was ever goodness, was  
 ever grace, like his? No; benevolence  
 is the basis and ground work of his cha-  
 racter, the first and most operative

## DISCOURSE II 77

principle in his whole conduct: and what is all he did, and said, and suffered, in mortal form, but so many pledges of friendship, which wondering saints repeat, and astonished angels recount, in songs of admiration round his throne; with which the church militant and the church triumphant resound, and which shall fill both earth and heaven with everlasting transport?

What a sweetness and value does the religion of Jesus derive from the friendship and dignity of its Author!—"In these last days God hath spoken to us by his Son." The great concerns of morality, it would seem, are too capital in the system of things, to be entrusted with any inferior agent: no merit, less inestimable, was adequate to the redemption of immortal souls. Such was the universal depravation of mankind, that, to purify and elevate their nature, by proper views of truth, to re-

moye the blindnes of their minds, and to rectify the extreme perversion of their affections, an extraordinary messenger and message were both indispensable.

And now, my dear Brethren, what say you to these things? Has Heaven been at so much pains for you, and will you be at none for yourselves? All this he does to convince you, that his very blessedness consists in making you blessed: and why not credit Him who cannot deceive, and, though he could, has no interest in deceiving? Where else, I beseech you, is happiness to be found? The gaieties of life are all a dream. Time is too precious to waste in the experiment; but, ask the wretch grown grey in crimes, and he will tell you with a groan, for sneering is no longer in his power, that Vice, in her most enchanting shapes, is uniformly worthless. Alas! whatever intoxicates your senses most, whatever keeps you

## DISCOURSE II. 79

at the greatest distance from religion, is already on wing, and will soon leave you forever. All the powers of imagination, and all the wishes of the heart, cannot recall a moment that is gone, or recover a pleasure that is past: and, oh! what signify the highest titles, the largest possessions, the choicest delicacies, to that man who has not the Almighty for his friend! A rash step, a wrong breath, a blast of wind, a drop of water, or a grain of sand, may tear him in one moment from all his grandeur, and fling him into hell.

Who would not feel for those who have all their portion in this life? But, while they feel not for themselves, they might probably think it rude to obtrude on their thought, what they apprehend not worth a thought. My dear hearers, let me not suppose one of you thus disposed: but surely you must allow with regret, that characters of this sort are by



## 80 DISCOURSE II.

no means uncommon. The truth is, religion declines apace. So entirely are mankind engrossed by the world, that the meanest enjoyments it affords are preferred to all the glories of eternity. Ignorant of themselves, they feel not their own dignity and weight, see not the worth and consequence of that immortal principle which lives and reigns within them: and the clamorous demands of these wild and tumultuous desires, which daily degrade and destroy so many, have yet more of their attention than He has, who "came not to condemn the world, but that the world, through him, might be saved." How long, O most Merciful! shall the blinded children of men be fond of every thing, but the "one thing needful!" How long shall impenitent transgressors abuse thy patience! how long rush heedless on the thick bosses of thy buckler! O! that every dead soul in this assembly might now hear the voice of the Son of

## DISCOURSE II. 81

God, and that they who hear may live!  
 Say not in your hearts, that religion is  
 a thing beyond your reach: can you  
 not be sorry for faults of which you  
 must be conscious, or abstain from  
 actions which your own hearts tell you  
 are criminal? Is it impossible, loaded  
 as you are with benefits, to be grate-  
 ful? And know you not that He, who  
 commands you to be good, commands  
 nothing which he will not enable you  
 to do? Presume not on some future  
 opportunity; this day, this hour, this  
 moment, may be your last. Time speeds  
 away; Death asks no permission; and the  
 grave never says, It is enough. Another  
 step may plunge you into an eternal  
 world, with all your crimes on your  
 head, where there is no place for re-  
 pentance. Let not the silly sneer of a  
 profligate world intimidate you: the  
 day is coming when they must answer  
 for themselves; and your souls will be re-  
 quired, not at their hands, but your own.

## 82 DISCOURSE II.

In one word, Religion assures you of happiness, in all respects, perfect and supreme: go to every rival that would dispute with her the empire of your heart; ask them, one by one, what they can give in exchange for your soul: make then the comparison, and chuse for yourselves.

Would you wish, amidst the vast variety of religious systems in vogue, to make a distinction, and prefer the best? Recollect the character of Christ: keep a steady eye on that universal and permanent good-will to men, in which he lived, by which he suffered, for which he died. What now would you expect from a mind so purely and habitually benign? Is it possible to suppose, that a heart thus warm and wide could harbour a narrow wish, or utter a partial sentiment? Most luckily, in this point, the fullest satisfaction is in every man's power. Go, search the religion he

has left, to the bottom: not in those artificial theories, however, which have done it the most essential and lasting injury; not in their manner who assume his name, but overlook his example, and who are talking forever about the merits of his death, at the expence of those virtues which adorned his life; not in those wild and romantic opinions, which, to make us Christians, would make us fools: but in those writings, and in those alone, which contain his genuine history and gospel; and which, in the most peculiar and exclusive sense, are the words of eternal life. Commentators are good for nothing but perplexing the head, and repressing the ardour of the heart. Do ye want sentiment, so do they; do ye want devotion, so do they; do ye want information, so do they. For my own part, I never saw one in my life, which was not a thousand times more unintelligible than the text. Do read the Scriptures then as you would



## 84 DISCOURSE II

the LAST WILL of some deceased friend, in which you expected a large bequest; and tell me, in the sincerity of your soul, what you see there to circumscribe the social affections, to quash the risings of benevolence, to check the generous effusions of humanity. Littleness of mind and narrowness of temper were certainly no parts of the Saviour's character; and he enjoins nothing which he did not himself uniformly and minutely exemplify. Strange! that an institution, which begins and ends in benignity, should be prostituted to countenance the workings of malevolent passions, should produce animosities among those minds it was intended to unite! But there is not a corruption in the human heart, which has not sometimes borrowed the garb of religion. Christianity, however, is not the less precious to the honest, that knaves and hypocrites have so long abused her: and, let bigots and sceptics say what they will, the

## DISCOURSE II. 85

softens and enlarges the heart, warms and impregnates the mind of man, as certainly, and as sensibly too, as the sun does the earth. This CRITERION is as obvious as it is decisive. True generosity is always open, always acceptable, and always known. Whoever would be thought pious, without this genuine signature of piety; be his behaviour as starch, and his face as sad and sanctimonious as you will, mark him down for a hypocrite: But he whose bosom heaves with kindness, who would not say or do a thing to hurt another for a world, whose ruling disposition is to be obliging and beneficent, whatever system he should adopt, lives under the visible influence of true goodness. Esteem him as a brother and kinsman: the same spirit which lives in you, lives in him: the divine image is stamped on him, as well as on you; and he copies that example which leads us all to immortality.

AMEN.

## DISCOURSE II.

and entered the heart within  
and purged the mind of man, as  
certainly, and as truly, too, as the  
Gods the earth. This doctrine is  
as obvious as a feather. The  
only thing that is always  
and always the same, and always

## DISCOURSE III.

and the fact as well as the demonstration is  
that will make him down for a  
thing to him and for a world, which

THE GENIUS OF THE GOSPEL  
knows, who would not say of his  
thing to him and for a world, which  
being disposed to be doing it and  
immanent, whether he be in the  
world, live under the will of nature  
of the gods. It can be a part  
and the world: the first point  
which is the first point in the  
the world is the first point in the  
will as a part of the world, and as  
single which is the first point in the

DISCOURSE II.

ON THE GENIUS OF THE GOSPEL.

# DISCOURSE III.

ON

THE GENIUS OF THE GOSPEL.



# DISCOURSE III.

On the Genius of the Gospel.

LUKE, XIX. 41, 42.

And when he thus came near, he beheld the City, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace!—But now they are hid from thine

eyes.

THE GENIUS OF THE GOSPEL.

**B**Y the same bullet, which killed a famous Warrior of the last age, an inferior Officer lost his arm—His son, a youth of true feeling and worth, alarmed at the sight, and rushing to him through the heat of the battle, began to bewail his misfortunes with many tears; but the father, with a sensibility and largeness of heart unexampled in modern times, pointing to the General slain by his side, It is not I, said he, but that great man there, you should weep for.

## DISCOURSE III.

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“ you should weep for.”

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Was not this, now, an instance of generosity equally magnanimous and affecting? yet, oh! how exceedingly beneath the sentiment in the text! In the one you see a Hero; in the other, a God: there Humanity rises above herself; here Divinity stoops, and puts on the bowels of humanity.

With what unexampled meekness and majesty does the Son of God submit to the righteous will of heaven; approach Jerusalem, where he had nothing to expect but infamy and disgrace; go in the benignity of his heart to be insulted, scourged, crucified, even by those he came to save! For yet a little while, and they, who now extol him in the loudest acclamations, shall be just as profuse in curses as they are in compliments. Who would not pity that man who lives on the breath of a mob, and swallows with greediness the poisonous adulation of fools! Is not the pitiful and

indiscriminating approbation of the vulgar, just as contemptible as it is fulsome? Who knows not that there are a few still, profligate as the world is, to whose countenance and suffrage the best and greatest on earth will always aspire, and appeal with tranquillity and confidence against the malignant clamour of Dullness and Vice, which every where confederate to blast their credit, and impair their comfort? This is a tribute, to which all kinds of mental and moral worth have a most undoubted claim. But the poor pitiful popular drudge has not a wish beyond the indelicate and undistinguishing shouts of the ignorant, unstable multitude: on their verdict he absolutely relies, from their lips receives his final reward; and there is something in the very tone of their voices, wonderfully soothing to the internal frame and original meanness of his soul. Indeed the lust of low-born applause is by much too sordid and selfish



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to engross the affections, or mingle, at least for any length of time, either with the make or motions of a generous and exalted nature : and though we should allow that many good men have been sometimes thus inconsistent with themselves, for there is no end of inconsistencies in the human character, most certainly He who assumed our nature without our imperfections, assumed also all our finer feelings and sentiments without any of our sinister and self-interested ones : and sure, if ever public approbation was right, or had power to charm, it was now, when the testimony was so general, and the merit so divine. But, mark the compassionate tone of his soul, and the humble tenour of his deportment, in a situation which must have filled every other mind with haughtiness and pride ! Alas ! why is that heart, which never harboured one guilty thought, thus deeply affected, so visibly wrong with sensibility and wo ! Is it

## DISCOURSE III. 93

common for the sons of Ambition, in this manner to mourn and lament, while their friends are in raptures, and the very air resounds with their praises? The sacred Historian accounts himself for the fact he relates. **AND WHEN HE CAME NEAR, HE BEHELD THE CITY, AND WEPT OVER IT.** What a sad spectacle must not that have been, which could thus affect his innocent and upright heart so intensely!

Glorious things are spoken of thee, O thou city of the living God! To use the language of sacred poetry, here the perfection of beauty shone, and salvation was appointed for walls and bulwarks.—Jerusalem was the metropolis of that famous land, which the Jews inherited by special promise, and which literally flowed with milk and honey.—The palaces of their kings, the residence of their nobles, and their courts of justice, were in Jerusalem.—The only

place perhaps on earth, for many generations, where the knowledge and worship of the true God prevailed, where his name was publicly recorded, and where sacrifices came up with acceptance on his altar, was at Jerusalem.—No city was ever so much the object of divine attention, so highly distinguished in privileges, so visibly protected by an extraordinary providence, as Jerusalem.—The temple of God stood in Jerusalem, the law of God was kept in Jerusalem, and the word of God began first to be preached at Jerusalem.

Notwithstanding these peculiar advantages, the various crimes, under which the whole inhabitants groaned, were innumerable and enormous. How often did Impiety and Idolatry, these parent vices of antiquity, debauch their hearts, and contaminate their lives ! The blackest ingratitude in return for the greatest favours, an open contempt of religion,

a general profligacy of manners, luxury and wantonness among the rich, petulance and impatience among the poor, "treasons, villainies, and spoils," of every kind, are marks by which they will be long known to nations yet unborn. Did ever Hypocrisy plot with less reserve, did ever Fanaticism flame with fiercer violence, did ever Superstition growl in harsher accents, did ever Bigotry lift up her horrid head with more frontless impudence, or shock humanity more essentially in every tender part, than here? What awful scenes of blood were daily exhibited under the garb of Piety, and within the only city on earth, where the God of Heaven had a visible residence! A Prophet could not perish but in Jerusalem; and He, to whom all the prophets gave witness, after enduring whatever malice, in conjunction with tyranny and power, could inflict, was also to accomplish his Decease at Jerusalem.



For very obvious purposes, the punishment of atrocious guilt is exceedingly acceptable to the human heart. In consequence of that strong and sympathetic law, by which nations and individuals are linked together, we naturally take part with the sufferer, and enter into all his feelings and resentments: but where the case is our own, this principle becomes just as much more forcible and operative, as self-love can make it. Blind to every sentiment of forgiveness, the heart, bleeding under a sense of its own wrongs, meditates revenge. Incensed by the secret suggestions of pride, every selfish prepossession then takes fire, anger boils in all our veins, and there is not one hostile passion in the soul, which is not ready to burst into action. Never was natural propensity more severely tried, or more illustriously overcome, than on this memorable occasion. Behold! in the great pattern of every human excellence, how the social and benevolent affec-

Our selfish ones, like all other things, are proper enough in their own room, but criminal beyond it: in retaliating wrongs we act like man, but in forgiving them we act like God.

In the breast of the mild and merciful Jesus, in spite of a thousand provocations, resentment gives way to pity; and the miseries of his most implacable enemies affect him much more deeply than the repeated Hosannas of his friends. That innate impatience and pride, which render the heart of man so little able to bear controul or brook affronts, and which must have been so natural on this occasion, is intirely suppressed by the force of much nobler principles: every little angry passion seems for the present suspended, or rather extinguished in his soul; and the warmest sentiments of clemency and compassion engross all the faculties and feelings of his heart: he beholds his unprovoked persecutors, ap-

proaches the scene of his unmerited sufferings, and faces all the malignity of hell and earth, not with the indignant rage of innocence in distress, but with the tenderest mercies of a benignant Deity; superior to the weakness, but susceptible in the highest degree of all the great and melting tones, of nature. How becoming this noble and elevated frame of mind in the blessed Author of that religion, which grafts the sublimest system of action on the purest benevolence! Never was generosity so superlatively great, never was the forgiveness of injuries so divinely magnified, never was sensibility expressed in such a rich luxuriant gush of heavenly affections, as in this memorable instance—Unmindful of the cruel usage he received from his countrymen—unmindful of their meditated malice and wickedness against him—unmindful of his own fame and reputation, which he knew would be established in their destruction—unmindful of the many dark

# DISCOURSE III. 99

and hellish plots they repeatedly hatched to dispatch him—unmindful of the ignominious death to which he foresaw they would bring him—unmindful of the outrage he was sure they would do, both to his memory and cause, when he was gone—HE BEHELD THE CITY, AND WEPT OVER IT.—Did ever the world see any thing like this before! Was ever clemency so wonderful! was ever compassion so divine! Where now your brightest examples of all that dignifies and adorns humanity? Bring forth the purest and most celebrated characters of antiquity, exhibit them in the fairest colours and the finest attitudes, and do the utmost justice to their mighty exploits and astonishing virtues; but let the best of them hide their heads, and bow with reverence in His presence, who uniformly spake and acted as never man did: for, though he knew all that was in their power, and all that was in their hearts against him, the single wish he in-



dulged was a wish for their welfare. He upbraids them indeed with ingratitude, as well he might; but his upbraidings are mingled with a tenderness and pity, which no heart but his could feel, which no language but his could express.

From this PASSAGE and these observations many useful instructions may be drawn.—That Christianity breathes a spirit of benignity—that the great design of it is the welfare and reformation of the world—that nothing, but our own impenitence, can render it ineffectual—and that the very worst are finally given up by Heaven with reluctance, are truths directly suggested in the text, and well deserving a serious attention.

—All the parts of Christianity are equally calculated to inspire and propagate a spirit of sensibility, to purge the temper of acrimony, the heart of

bitterness, and the life of envy. Guilt,  
 like a bomb, shot from the haunts of  
 Hostility and Evil, set the whole world  
 on fire; and what is the Gospel, but  
 the mercy of Heaven quenching the  
 flames of Hell? In what strong and  
 affecting colours does it not exhibit our  
 connection with a kind and benevolent  
 Divinity! In what beautiful and grow-  
 ing variety are not all the parts of his  
 blessed administration delineated! In  
 what a wonderfully sublime and striking  
 majesty are the unsearchable riches of  
 redeeming goodness displayed! These  
 are the capital and leading things which  
 Christianity reveals, and reveals pro-  
 fessedly to ennoble and exalt, to soften  
 and polish the human character: and  
 the moment a man becomes a Christian,  
 he quits, in part at least, the inordinate  
 attachments of sense, and looks on the  
 world, unless when he forgets himself,  
 as a very little thing. How superior,  
 on many occasions, is he to its frowns!

and his flatteries, how vastly beneath him! At times he lives above, and his principles render him in a great measure independent of, that selfish and absorbing system, in which mean and mercenary spirits are so fatally and frequently warped. How open his heart, the seat of benevolence and pity, to the feelings, his ears to the complaints, and his hands to the wants, of his fellow creatures! Indeed he seldom witnesses an instance of wretchedness, which he cannot relieve, but it costs him a groan. It is the temperature and complexion of his new frame, to "bear all things, believe all things, hope all things." His mind has now quite a different turn of thought from what she had before, and extends with the many glorious and magnificent prospects which open to her view, and solicit her approach: his heart springs indignant from the pitiful objects to which it has been formerly addicted, and enlarges with innum-

## DISCOURSE III. 103

numerable views of heavenly and divine things, which now interest and delight him; and his affections, no longer in bondage to appetite and passion, branch out and spread on all sides with the wide wish of benevolence, which respects not a single relative, a single family, a single nation, or a single age, but, arising from parts to universals, grasps the whole human race. Here all his sensibility is exerted; for he regards the insatuated children of men with sentiments of the purest tenderness and concern: he forgives their ignorance, pities their weakness, shares their misery, and their depravity wrings his heart with indignation and sorrow: he can spurn at the charms of reigning iniquity, break through the slavery of fashion, and treat the varieties of a vain world with a good deal of well-grounded contempt. Principles have laid hold on his mind, and got the mastery of his heart, which fling his wishes and desires far beyond the



verge of mortality, which connect him with heaven and eternal things, and which pour through his whole frame and his whole manner an everlasting stream of sympathetic kindness. What occasion has he for envy, whose happiness he knows full well depends so essentially on that of others? Can malice find a place in that soul, where growing simplicity and goodness sit enthroned? What mortal thing can ruffle his temper, embitter his affections, or rankle his heart, who habitually thinks, and speaks, and acts, from motives of genuine kindness? whom all things are calculated to please, whom saints care for, whom angels serve, whom heaven loves?

In truth, my brethren, let the world say what it will, religion takes full and firm possession of human nature, and shines with a bright and conspicuous lustre through all the departments of human life. How very desirable, and adequate

to every craving of the heart, must not that friend be, whose sentiments are thus exalted, whose dispositions are thus divine! That exquisite sensibility, which often makes the best so wretched, and the worst so worthless, would then be a blessing instead of a curse: the feelings of the honest and delicate would not be so wantonly sported with as they are; nor the warm, affectionate, full heart, which so few know how to value aright, so frequently rended as it is by the rash inconsiderate levity of dead, unfeeling, thoughtless minds. How essential is tenderness to humanity! how barbarous and embruted are the most effeminate natures without it! Does not tenderness stamp a dignity and value on the mind, and every thing about it, in the same manner that beauty does on the body? Tenderness, more inestimable than all mental endowments beside, is the perfection of Virtue and the parent of Grace. How unspeakably superior the Master,

the Magistrate, the Prince, whose dispositions are uniformly kind, indulgent, and generous, to those of opposite and less amiable characters! Indeed, whatever is engaging in the filial affections of a child, in the delicate attachments of relations, in the mutual coalescence of congenial minds, in the anxious solicitude of an endearing wife, and the generous attentions of a loving husband, springs from that heavenly and divine principle, which runs through all the precepts of Christianity, and affects all the parts of the Christian life; and without which woman were a fury, man a bear, society a dungeon, and nature a monster.

—That man is not naturally in friendship with his Maker, that he is strangely alienated from and at real variance with him, the scriptures strongly and uniformly declare. In this dangerous situation all our ideas of revealed re-

## DISCOURSE III. 107

ligion suppose him; on this fundamental  
 hypothesis the whole fabric of Christi-  
 anity rests. Once suppose the original  
 innocence and perfection of human na-  
 ture, and the necessity of the Gospel is  
 effectually superseded; for why impose  
 the belief of a Saviour on those already  
 in a state of safety? He came to free  
 the guilty from punishment, to pro-  
 cure assistance for the impotent, and  
 life for the dead. If these are the natu-  
 ral characters of sinners, that of a savi-  
 our is apposite, and the plan of salva-  
 tion, as published by him, consistent and  
 uniform: if these are not the natural  
 characters of sinners, who sees not that  
 the whole is a fiction? But is there  
 a man, among all mankind, who dare  
 lay his hand deliberately on his heart,  
 and exculpate himself from the charge?  
 I mean not those who are desperate  
 enough to wage open war with Omni-  
 potence, and avow their unnatural  
 rebellion in the very face of Heaven:



108 DISCOURSE III.

no; these are monsters, whom yet the world, abandoned as it is, cannot look on without horror. But I ask the wisest and the best, if there are not many things, even in your own conduct, for which your own hearts condemn you? And, if you plead guilty, with what confidence can the rest of the world boast of their innocence?

Why palliate the matter? Look into life, I beseech you, and judge for yourselves. Are there not many, with all the advantages of religion, still lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God? and what would they not be without it? These are they, who prefer the dream of a sickly fancy to the most durable and substantial good;—these are they, on whom the fashion of the world, which passeth away, has much greater influence than the word of God, which abideth forever;—these are they, who give full swing to their passions, and would rather

# DISCOURSE III. 109

be surpris'd in the fashionable crimes of a profligate age; than caught in the exercise of one amiable virtue;—these are they, who have no taste at all for the calm and tranquil delights of a good life, but wallow without restriction in the lawless indulgence of every sensual appetite. Some are so keen in pushing their schemes of profit, that they have neither leisure nor inclination to consider whether the means, they use for that purpose, be right or wrong: others prefer the beggarly hopes of ambition to all that is desirable in earth or heaven, and would rather lose their souls than disappoint their pride. This is drunk with vanity, that with interest, and a third with pleasure. And what are these, but so many instances of the same fatal spirit of apostacy, which, however it may differ in individuals, predominates more or less in all?

forever;—these are they, who give full swing to their passions, and would rather

Now the Gospel is the only religion under heaven, that can effectually remedy all these evils; that goes to the bottom of the human heart, and plucks up every species of corruption and wretchedness by the very roots. How becoming then the great and merciful sovereign of the world, to publish a system of reformation so happily adapted to our circumstances! For every part of this astonishing dispensation has a most immediate tendency to sanctify and save. Our aversion to God is cured by that repentance which his goodness inspires; and our extreme ignorance and incredulity, by the faith of his operation. Why, O sinner! does the supreme Governor of earth and heaven thus put on the bowels of a reconciled and indulgent parent, but to gain your affection, and encourage your confidence? Why is the promise of eternal life, the great Gospel absolution, so fully exhibited and urged on your acceptance, but that you may

## THIS COURSE III. 111

not die in your sins? Why offered, in the plainest and most explicit manner, the seasonable aids of that good and gracious Spirit, who condescends to be the friend, and comforter, and correspondent of human kind, but that you may have a happy life, a blessed death, and a joyful immortality? In short, what is the language of every doctrine, of every privilege, of every promise, of every precept, in the revelation of heaven, but that a kind and compassionate God “would have all men “every where to repent?”

— Nothing, but obstinate impenitence, can frustrate the merciful designs of the Gospel: the most acceptable thing to Heaven, from rational creatures, is innocence and real contrition of heart; and penitence of life where that is wanting. Now, when we deliberately persist in hardening ourselves against conviction, when we remain dead to the



## 112 DISCOURSE III.

remonstrances of conscience, dead to the voice of Providence, and dead to the calls of the Gospel, is it not a strong and striking symptom of that blindness of mind, which the despisers of mercy habitually imprecate on their own heads? Let each of us watch the several emotions of our own hearts. Are we incapable of divine impressions? Do neither the promises of the Gospel allure, nor its threatenings awe? Can we hear of an eternity, a heaven, and a hell, without solicitude? Then is our case alarming and desperate. We have ventured on hostile ground within the confines of the enemy, perhaps within his intrenchments: and who can tell, but Providence may permit him to cut off our retreat? Even the closest hypocrite cannot always prolong the farce; must, one time or other, appear without his mask: his own conscience may connive at his frauds, and Providence, for reasons unknown to mortals, permit

## DISCOURSE II. 113

for a while his execrable deceit; but an appointed crisis awaits, when both shall conspire together, and stare him out of countenance. Neither rooted nor grounded in the truth, his temporary profession necessarily dies away; and nothing is left to exercise his deluded and desperate imagination, but either sallies of impiety, or pangs of despair.

Holiness is represented in Scripture as not less essential to the health of the soul, than food is to that of the body; and sin, as equally destructive of both: the one we are led to consider as the very life, the other as somewhat worse than the death, of human nature. By cultivating the first on Gospel principles, the only principles indeed on which it can be cultivated, we have the surest prospect of happiness; whereas, by obstinately persisting in the second, we counteract the grace of God, all-powerful and sovereign as it is, ren-

#### 114 DISCOURSE III.

der our own salvation impossible, and precipitate ourselves beyond the line of mercy.

There seems a point in all the material productions of Nature, where her progressive influences are suspended: all her plastic powers not only fail then of their wonted success, but often recede with more facility than they advanced. It is thus with animals and plants unexceptionably, and thus in the most literal and conspicuous sense with human nature. The maturity of these perishable bodies is that critical juncture, when every organ is finished, when the system is complete, where the line of life runs short, and that of death begins. From this capital period in human life a very sensible declension takes place: the spirits flag, the strength abates, the fountain dries, and the springs of life stagnate apace, till the whole frame, shattered, exhausted, and worn to a

thread, crumbles down, and sinks into dissolution.

This strange and striking revolution is what every man feels in his body, and what, were he as much attentive to the one as the other, he might also feel perhaps in his moral powers. To some thing similar at least, if not to something very much the same, in the history of the individual, as an accountable agent, the capital motives of the Gospel refer. The present moment is only ours, the past irrevocable, and the future beyond the reach of mortals: we are bound down by the express authority of Heaven to an immediate compliance with the terms of salvation; and in the solemn sight of the Almighty must proceed our transgressions, frequently, if not always, unfathomable to finite minds.

The uncertainty of life indeed is one of the great and good reason, why we should



## 110 DISCOURSE III.

make the most we can of this, in the view of another; but many things unknown to us, in the oeconomy of Providence, may also render it exceedingly hazardous and awful to dally with the great concerns of eternity. We know not to what degree of guilt impenitence may arrive. Habits may spring up in this noxious soil, which cannot be destroyed without involving nature in their ruins; which may taint the inmost recesses of the soul, and vitiate all her principles of action; which may shut up every sluice of penitence, and finally exhaust all those soft and sentimental, those warm and feeling vessels, with which the human heart is so liberally blessed. What then is the use of reason, remonstrance, or intreaty, to one who heeds not, hears not, minds not, any such thing? The Gospel accosts the conscience, the judgment, the affections; but the conscience, and the judgment, and the affections, of such a

finer, seem not dead only, but annihilated.

—When the salvation of sinners is thus frustrated by their own unconquerable obstinacy, Heaven gives them up to punishment with infinite sympathy and regret. The honour of the divine government is as much concerned in executing the threatenings, as in accomplishing the promises, of the Gospel: but in every such case, so inviolably are the rules of eternal righteousness observed, that whoever falls a victim to the curse is self-convicted and self-condemned. Thus, while the sword of justice is yet unsheathed, hear the great God appealing to guilty and rebellious creatures, in behalf of the sentence passed against them. “And now, “O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that

"I have not done in it? Wherefore, when  
 "I looked that it should bring forth  
 "grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

But mercy often feels, where justice  
 dare not spare; and goodness may some-  
 times relent, when examples of severity  
 are indispensable. Thus the tender-  
 hearted judge, consistently enough, sym-  
 pathises with the malefactor, whom the  
 laws of his country oblige him to con-  
 demn: and when impenitent sinners have  
 destroyed themselves, they fall not even  
 then unlamented. Can a legislator, of but  
 common humanity, behold with indif-  
 ference his subjects, by an open defiance  
 of law and justice, wilfully provoke  
 their fate? What are the pangs of  
 a parent's heart, when he sees a be-  
 loved child persisting in courses that  
 must destroy him? And is there any  
 relation among men so emphatically  
 strong and sacred, as that which sub-  
 sists between the Great Father of all

# DISCOURSE III. 119

and his rational offspring? But why now are the means of grace, and hopes of salvation, still continued? Why his long-suffering patience so much exercised? Why repeatedly commanded to repent? and why the space of our repentance from time to time protracted? Must all the dispensations of providence, all the institutions of mercy, all the stirrings of his spirit, and all the fruits of his bounty, thus go for nothing? Rather, is not this the language of all his dealings with mankind, whether in mercy or judgment, that he has no pleasure in their death?

With what a noble and pathetic sensibility of heart did the Son of God deplore the woful condition of irreclaimable transgressors in the days of his flesh! Was he not grieved with the hardness of their hearts? Did he not upbraid them with their unbelief? And the righteous vengeance of Heaven,



which the impenitence of the Jews brought on their own heads, touched him to the very soul. He laments their destiny in the most affecting and plaintive terms: he bewails their catastrophe with tears, who were shortly to shed his precious blood, and pierce his innocent and feeling heart, without a groan. And now, that he sits on a throne of glory above all might and dominion, can he be a less concerned spectator of our wretchedness? How intensely must he not feel, whose heart is all compassion and pity, to see the dismal havock which sin is daily making in the moral world; to see the designs of mercy frustrated, his kindness insulted, his benignity derided, and his grace treated with contempt! He knows too well how precious souls are, how heavy guilt is, how far the wrath of an infinite God extends, and how certain the consequences of sin must be, not to feel for those who will not be

# DISCOURSE III. 121

saved: he sees the fatal chain which binds them down to perdition, but which they have rendered impossible for him to break. Thus he deplores their fate who put away his salvation from them; and even they, who spurn at his friendship, still share his tears.

AMEN.

# DISCOURSE III.

needs: he felt the fatal chain which  
held them down to perdition, but  
which they have rendered ineffectual  
by his death. Thus he delivers  
their souls who put away the law  
of sin.

# DISCOURSE IV.

ON THE

ON THE

# INEFFICACY OF PREACHING.

DISCOURSE IV.

ON THE

INEFFICACY OF PREACHING.



## DISCOURSE IV.

On the Inefficacy of Preaching.

## DISCOURSE IV.

—All day long I have stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Nothing can be more certain than that an evil spirit of levity, dissipation, and profligacy, has gone forth among us, and shed its baneful influence all over the nation. What is our devotion, for the most part, but a servile compliance with the local cant of the times; what our virtue, but custom split into as many threads and shreds as we have interests and inclinations; and what our boasted monuments of public munificence, but the natural excitement of an over-grown luxury? There are not wanting of the

## DISCOURSE IV.

### On the Inefficacy of Preaching.

ROM. x. 21.

*—All day long I have stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

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most learned, as well as of the most illiterate, who frequently affect to laugh at every serious and sacred thing. Scepticism and impiety make large strides, to the general extirpation of whatever bears the name of religion. In spite of ties the most solemn, in spite of professions the most venerable, deistical tenets are espoused, scandalous immoralities practised with impunity. Hardness and insincerity of heart, implacability of temper, a dark suspiciousness of soul, luxury, irreligion, and wantonness, predominate in every station; are the characteristic features, will be recorded by historians as the opprobrium of the age. In how many companies, where even the least slip in point of ceremony is marked to your disadvantage, shall not our holy religion be subjected to ridicule, its duties despised, its doctrines derided, its professors traduced? It would seem, as if the perverseness of the heart increased in proportion as

## DISCOURSE IV. 127

means of improvement accumulate; that the passions, though less fiery and tumultuous, are more crafty and malignant; and that the affections become less susceptible of good impressions, as the rational faculties expand, as the eyes of the understanding are enlightened.

This is an awful picture of human nature, and the more awful that it is true. Religion was never better understood, never worse practised, than at present. Means of reformation are now within the reach of every individual; and yet this lamentable reflection resounds, or may resound at least, from every pulpit in the kingdom.

“How long shall we struggle in vain  
 “with the vices that degrade the mind,  
 “and blacken the life of man? Our  
 “doctrines are disregarded by the  
 “giddy, and contested by the quibbling.  
 “With all the advantages of litera-



#### DISCOURSE IV.

care and science on our side, we still  
make few profelytes, produce little  
or no lasting influence on the lives  
of our hearers. The most important  
things, that can possibly engage a  
thinking being, gain but a temporary  
attention at most, suddenly die away,  
and are felt no more; insomuch that,  
of all who attend our instructions,  
scarce one out of fifty go away better  
men, or better Christians, more  
honest, or more holy."  
So that Preachers have long com-  
plained, and may still complain, of  
STRETCHING FORTH THEIR HANDS  
TO A DISOBEDIENT AND GAINSAIYING  
PEOPLE. It was thus in the days of  
Hailah; it was thus in the days of Paul;  
and is it not eminently thus in our days?  
Be as serious, importunate, and perein-  
tory, as you can; assume the highest  
possible authority; employ the most  
convincing arguments; and dwell, if

## DISCOURSE IV. 129.

you will, on the alarming circumstances  
 of death, judgment, eternal happiness,  
 and eternal destruction; lay before them  
 in the plainest terms whatever can rouse  
 their consciences, seize their imagi-  
 nations, touch their passions, or interest  
 their hearts; work repeatedly on their  
 hopes and their fears by all that is dread-  
 ful, or desirous, within the verge of  
 existence; make them sensible of their  
 present dark and guilty circumstances,  
 of that woe which must inevitably suc-  
 ceed to vice, of their own impotence  
 and debility, of the patience and benig-  
 nity of Heaven; tell them what they  
 owe to their Maker, their Saviour, and  
 themselves; what an injured Divinity,  
 what a feeling Redeemer, what pitying  
 angels, what good men, what heaven  
 and earth, eternal Providence, and uni-  
 versal Nature, have all done to prevent  
 their ruin: and yet, O Corruption,  
 how wide the desolation thou hast  
 wrought! how cruel the ravages thou

130 DISCOURSE IV.

hast made in humanity! like the deaf adder, who stops her ears to the voice of the charmer, they will not, cannot, hear. They want dispositions to receive; their inmost propensities are smitten with a rooted aversion to the TRUTH. With hearts insensible to its charms, with heads blind to its beauties, they despise it because they feel not its efficacy, they reject it because they see not its excellence.

Unaccountable as this distemperature of heart may appear, it has but too deep a foundation in the nature of man. What a group of inconsistent and contradictory principles live and operate at once in the human constitution! How many of these perpetually spring away, as in a right line, from Religion! How many others, by a direction no less strange and mysterious, run full in her face! She defeats the selfishness, she

alarms the pride of the heart, because all her privileges are gratuitous, all her virtues grafted on humility. Who regrets not the awful degradation of that immortal Being, who began a round of everlasting blessedness with all the vigour of the purest rectitude, in all the glory of divine resemblance? How affecting and mortifying the contrast! Then unspotted innocence gladdened our souls, untarnished goodness brightened our lives, unbroken health flowed in our veins: Now, guilt and pollution combine to quash every pleasing sensation that rises within us; vices chequer and sink our character; diseases shatter and demolish our frame. Alas! Human Nature! what hast thou not suffered? what mayest thou not yet suffer? How mortally wounded! And the blackest symptom of a case so desperate is,—**THOU WILT NOT BE CURED.**



DISCOURSE IV.  
132

The necessary existence of one supreme intelligent MIND, is an idea so natural to the least exertion of intellect, that it is never less fallacious, perhaps, than when most involuntary. Are not sceptics sometimes deaf to the sophistry of scepticism? Do not atheists themselves, on certain occasions, give the eye to their own impious creed? And the same train of thought, by which we know for certain there is a God, leads us also to some imperfect conceptions both of his character, and our connection with him. But the settled consciousness of acting a part so unworthy our natures and dependence, of being unable to stand before him should he mark iniquity, blasts the felicity that must otherwise have arisen from a sense of his friendship. What we cannot obtain by merit, we make up from necessity; and, having no reasonable ground of hope, endeavour to ~~be~~ as little as possible. To soften

the prospect of judgment, we form to ourselves a character of the judge, however flattering to a guilty mind, uniformly repugnant to every feeling of conscience. Thus, when the terrors of futurity close and thicken around us, we disclaim a being in which we must be wretched; and all our inmost feelings are shocked, revolt at the sight of that yawning gulph, which threatens our destruction. Now the Gospel being an explicit and full exhibition of mercy, every incorrigible offender must there see what he has to expect from a God, who pardons every thing but impenitence. He may see too a method of reconciliation; but that method is incompatible with his temper, and he hates it because it robs him of all his sensual indulgences. Were these less dear, his contempt of the Gospel would abate; but while these keep possession of his heart, he must, he cannot but detest it. In this manner the depravity of human nature,

like the power of elasticity, which silently presses against every resistance, aims all its force against the means that would remove it, mingles its malignant influence with the passions and pursuits of mankind, tinctures the bias of every character, bends every temper to its purpose, and hides the poison it disseminates under the garb of every profession.

Mark the ambitious:—Will ever they entertain a thought to the prejudice of their projects? No: if Pride reigns, she must reign alone: every step to humility threatens her empire, facilitates her ruin. There is, however, a certain littleness in her greatest exertions, as well as a hollowness in her fairest professions, which she is not able to conceal: she often changes appearance indeed, and artfully shifts the scene; but the heart, under her influence, is ever rash and precipitant, ever in the same tone notwithstanding the different keys

it assumes. Though the presumption of hypocrites dispose them to affect the confidence of a good conscience, their momentary starts of penitence are not, for that reason, the genuine breathings of a contrite heart: they are seldom religious, but to answer a purpose; never irreligious, but when religion counteracts their desires. Most assuredly the Gospel has nothing in it to gratify such a spirit: it breathes nothing but humility, teaches nothing but humility, inspires nothing but humility. How wisely are the principles of it calculated to bring down the lofty rocks, to suppress the romantic imaginations, to mortify the vanity of human kind! To the humble and contrite are all its promises directed; on the poor in spirit are all its privileges conferred: and how should, how can the deluded sons of Pride, who live on the applause of a moment, as literally as the Chameleon does on air, imbibe



the mortifying genius of the Gospel, deny themselves, submit to the hardships of a pious life, or act a part so much despised and rejected of men? <sup>that it would taste them to the station</sup> Let Religion say what she will, men can neither go naked, nor starve; and who is either sensible or honest enough to distinguish between the lawful means of industry, and an inordinate love of the world? Money sparkles with so many charms in idea, blesses us so liberally at a distance, catches the humour of every individual so readily, captivates so universally and at once, and is thought, on the whole, a prize of such consequence, that all the world have started in the chace. And what are the infinite pursuits that diversify human life, but the various and complicated tracks, in which this capricious phantom, under every form that can dazzle and distract imagination, like a meteor of the night, dances only to amuse, and

flits, but to mislead? The Needy,  
 urged onward by hunger and hardship,  
 speed away, from a conviction, that it  
 would satisfy all their wants; the Low,  
 that it would raise them to the station,  
 and adorn them with the splendor, of  
 the great; and the Great, that it would  
 not only fill up all those ideal chasms,  
 which a superabundance of it creates,  
 but also bestow that tranquillity and  
 peace of mind, which, if indeed pos-  
 sessed on earth, for certain never was  
 in a Palace. All agree that it is good  
 to have, but ill to want; and abso-  
 lutely make a jest of whatever is said  
 against it. Even after COMPETENCE is  
 acknowledged, a thousand things are  
 urged with excuses for pushing the ac-  
 quisition a little farther. Old Age ap-  
 proaches with his meagre looks, and  
 requires the most friendly intercourse  
 with Plenty, and all her jovial com-  
 panions, to soften his iron brow. It  
 will extend, say the generous, their

# 198 DISCOURSE IV.

sphere of doing good. This has a large family to provide for; that, a certain rank and equipage to support: in short, all have some scheme or other in agitation, which, however, without MONEY cannot be accomplished. Hence the Trader is tempted to over-reach in trade, merely because most Traders do so; and, under the covert of a reasonable profit, conceal inveterate habits of dishonesty. The question here is not, what calls you have to make rich, but whether a disposition of that kind does not, in fact, give you a dislike to religion. Must not the Miser then, whose very life is bound up in his treasures, detest the principles that would snatch them from him? He may attempt to reconcile God and Mammon, that his want of piety impede not his increase of wealth: but he is rooted and grounded in the world, his whole soul absorbed in the prospect of gain, and his heart, like

## DISCOURSE IV. 2139

that of Nabal, as dead as a stone to every other feeling.

Carry your antiquated schemes of reformation to the giddy and the gay: do you think a Man of Fashion can adopt a rule of life so destructive of his game? You may as well tell a Child to throw away his rattle, a Pedant his forms, and a Quack his nostrums, as expect to make the thoughtless think, or chase them, in the intoxication of madness, from the circle of folly to retirement and devotion. No, the passion for illicit pleasure, if possible, is more incongruous to the heavenly spirit of religion, because less decent than any other. What, for example, is your sprightly, sparkling Man of Gallantry, but the meteor of an hour, which fashion forms at random, which lives in an instant, and in an instant dies—a rotten member of society, disseminating putrefaction and death.



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through the whole—a wild bear let loose on the multitude—a puny insect thwarting eternal justice, and daring Omnipotence with a fool's cap on? Wherever appetite points, he runs; and then there is nothing to which he will not stoop, no baseness he will not commit, no lengths he will not go, no form he will not take, no character he will not personate. His ideas of honour, so romantic in one line, so hollow in another; what a shocking proof how the strangest incongruities, by a very odd conjunction, compose one motley mass, and creep into human shape! See this youth of spirit—now meanly skulking behind every curtain, laying every stratagem, practising every art, sacrificing every idea of truth, every remonstrance of conscience, every feeling of humanity;—and all for the infamous and execrable purpose of ruining innocence, of robbing some poor, weak, simple, unsuspecting thing of her all:

# DISCOURSE IV. 141

—then, after coming off victorious in this unequal struggle, he grows great all on a sudden, and stabs, in what he thinks a fit of harmless good-humour, a brother, perhaps, of the same blessed fraternity with himself, for giving one of his dignity, probity, and worth, forsooth, the Lye. Heavens! what a prostitution of terms! how wanton is guilt in a profligate! Where at last must not vice and villainy plunge him? And is there any thing here to bear Religion in countenance, to second her efforts, to give her the least chance of success? She demands the intire undivided possession of the heart. Alas! his heart is no longer in his power; he has no heart to give. Vice, prior in her title, and conscious of absolute dominion, spurns the requisition of her rival, and keeps fast hold of his soul. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” But what cares he for that? He knows no God, but

his belly, his women, and his wine. To THEM he devotes his time, talents, strength, and fortune; THEM he loves, adores, and caresses; and after THEM, in spite of all that is dear, or delightful, or sacred and interesting, in earth or heaven, he will go. Desperate wretch! what a dance art thou led by those very FRIENDS, who, though now pandars to thy pleasures, must be soon thy cruellest tormentors! No wonder so very few become religious from this quarter. Imagination grows too wild and impetuous to admit the reins of sobriety; the affections are too much jaded and exhausted to receive impressions of goodness; the taste too much vitiated to relish the beauties of holiness; the heart too deeply poisoned ever henceforth to be cured.

Do you then expect the attention of People of Rank? Indeed! Accommodate yourself to them as much as you please, Religion ever was, and ever will be, too

simple, too plain a thing, to merit their approbation. Will they meet Her addresses with readiness, who censures without ceremony; or give Her an impartial hearing, who neither lavishes her compliments on exterior distinction, nor flatters the ear of greatness with empty adulation? Do they consider her as at all essential to a genteel education? Are the youth of either sex, who it is thought should cut the finest figure and make the greatest noise in life, formed in the least by her spirit? How can she be courted by, or pleasant to, the fashionable, while Fashion sparkles most without her? Which of her walks do they frequent? to which of her dictates listen? with which of her companions associate? What are those spectres, who haunt the downy couch of Luxury? The tender sensibilities of humanity, the bashful but beauteous charms of devotion, are seldom found in a bustle, dwell not often in the bosom



## 124 DISCOURSE IV.

of Wealth. Friendship, if there at all, is rather stared at as a stranger, than caressed and distinguished like a guest. Piety at least is fled, and with her all the finer delicacies of the heart, which arise from a chaste fancy and a sound understanding. Indeed levity, and petulance, and pride, are almost as inseparable from a consciousness of wealth and distinction, as abjection is from an habitual sense of dependence. Religion, even in her gayest clothing, appears, to the upper part of the world, at best but an officious Intruder. Her duties require more sincerity than the whim of ceremony permits; her presence, more decency and attention than can be spared from the common rotation of complaisance and diversion; and her excellence, more true discernment and sensibility than are to be expected from the taste of the times. Politicians will tell you, religion was not made for princes; and the lives of but

## DISCOURSE IV. 145

too many justify the adage. The sentiments she breathes, the company she keeps, the manners she adopts, and the ends she pursues, are so incompatible with the genius of High Life, that to this day “not many mighty, not many noble, are called.”

Are those in Low Life then better qualified for imbibing the spirit, and realizing the precepts, of Christianity? Is it here we are to look for that purity and integrity of manners, that mutual affection, tenderness, and esteem, which chiefly adorn and distinguish the pious and the good? In my mind, the most wretched of all human beings is he, who is both miserable here and hereafter; a beggar on earth, and an outcast of heaven; among men the most wretched, among devils the most accursed. Yet, though none have so much need of religion as the poor, the poor, of all others, seem least dis-

## 146 DISCOURSE IV.

posed to receive it. Here indeed hardly any such thing as one trace of principle is to be found: rudeness takes place of simplicity, malignity of candour, dissimulation of truth, art of nature, and turpitude of innocence. The fact is, the same want of true sensibility, the same innate depravity of heart, which disposes one half of the world to reject religion because incompatible with luxury, levity, and idleness, disposes the other to give it a similar reception because incompatible with every vulgar prepossession. Impelled by trick and low cunning to the meanest and most execrable species of hypocrisy; addicted, from the beginning to the end of life, to habits of servility and dependence; with minds dark as night, and hearts as callous as a stone; they hate the ingenuity recommended by the Gospel, because a satire on their manners, or overlook it, because con-

and lasting goodness than this. The

## DISCOURSE IV. 147

sonant to nothing within the range of their own feelings.

Do not the active part of mankind plunge into business with an ardour and anxiety, which seldom leave leisure for one sober or pious reflection? The moment a man thinks of making a fortune, or acquiring a name, he has neither ears to hear, nor a heart to feel, any thing not immediately connected with his darling pursuit. The wildest ideas that rush into the wildest head, when the heart conceives a partiality for them, are retained, adopted, and operate as principles of action. The Men of the World are engrossed by a phantom, which haunts them by night and by day, and to which all their thoughts, their words, and their actions, are most scrupulously and uniformly devoted. Perhaps there is not a state of mind less favourable to serious and lasting goodness than this. The



## 148 DISCOURSE IV.

charm, which the sorcery of Pleasure imposes on the dissolute and giddy, is often broke by one accidental stroke; nor are there wanting a thousand situations, in which the fibres of a churlish heart may relax. Disappointment quashes the rage of ambition; and either hope or fear, when suitably roused, will alarm the most hardened insensibility: but the mind, hackneyed in business, sinks so deep in its track, becomes so mechanical in its motions, is so moulded with the care, and cant, and catch of traffic, that to raise, or alter, or refine it, requires a power not less than omnipotent.

But what defeats the Gospel more than any other thing, is that lying spirit of Scepticism, which hath seized, and animates so remarkably, the modern patrons of literature and science. It is by assuming the sacred name of Philosophy, that Sophistry imposes her

## DISCOURSE IV. 149

nostrums on the world. This is that fatal rock, on which so many young candidates for fame are so frequently shipwrecked; the shelves where even Genius heated in the pursuit of literary glory, and blinded with the fumes of intemperate ambition, but too often founders and sinks for ever. How many private associations are, at bottom, real seminaries of infidelity, in which sentiments are hatched which burst into life, pervert the credulous, and ruin the sprightly! Some, who have no pretensions to learning or reading at all, who know nothing either about reasoning or science, are yet to be found among the honourable fraternity of Free-thinkers. Indeed they can plunge into fashionable vices, laugh at Revelation, and violate the venerable form of Religion, as well without system as with it. The impious jargon of their leaders is commonly as short and superficial, indeed, as it is low and contempt-

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ible: they catch and chime it with wonderful facility; and since it is not in their power to shine as Men of Letters, they think, forsooth, that illiberal sarcasms on religion should set them forth as Men of Wit. They have heard innuendos circulated in their clubs, to the discredit of the Gospel; and the wild unmeaning levity, by which the rudest things are gilded over, like large draughts of opium, stupify and drench them in a dream, from which hell itself can hardly awake them.

It will now be asked, no doubt, Are Preachers then the only persons altogether blameless in this affair? Well do I know how gladly an ill-natured world breaks loose on Priests of all denominations. I will gratify them for once, by a concession which, perhaps, they did not expect. Affuredly the ministers of religion are accountable in part at least, for its success in the

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world. Every thing is attributed to the genius of the times; but whatever contributes to corrupt them, must also have its influence.

A point, in which so many are concerned, should be treated, I am sensible, with much deference and delicacy. Ye venerable and worthy FEW, who understand and act your parts with propriety, much too superior to censure to be offended with my freedom; I look up to you with admiration and reverence, and learn my duty with humility and gratitude at your feet: and, however proper I may deem it to be plain with others, I will not hazard a word, even to you, which I do not find from experience to be useful to myself.

I allow all, that can be allowed, for the elegance of composition. Why should we not excel in every classical and genteel accomplishment, in every species



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of profound and polite literature? Good taste, pure sentiments, sublime conceptions, extensive knowledge, copious and correct language, are all essential to a good Preacher. But then, let us not be better Writers than Speakers. To improve the world in true and substantial worth, is an object to which we implicitly sacrifice every thing: and the question is, By what method shall we most effectually accomplish that end? Surely, not by a torrent of popular phraseology, by spinning out the artificial cobwebs of the schools, by quibbling metaphysics, chopping logic, or speaking to our hearers, as if perfectly indifferent whether they heard us or not. Would to God, opinion gave way to truth, speculation to persuasion, the language of art to that of nature, and long laborious disquisitions to the simple effusions of sentiment and experience! What, though we address the understanding with much energy, and much

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success, while we seldom think either of engaging the fancy, or persuading the will?

He is a Quack with a witness, who prescribes a remedy without being able to point out the sore. Our vices are evidently owing more to presumption than ignorance. The Rake is often as sensible as you, that his conduct is criminal: but reason is blinded; conscience, modesty, and shame, have lost their influence; and he is hurried to his ruin by every intemperate fiend that lays hold on his soul. The case is the same with all mankind, in proportion as under the dominion of iniquity. More perverse than stupid, to reform their manners we need only interest their affections: they die, merely because they will not live. Meddle not once then with the judgement, till you have disputed successfully the settled propensity of the heart. If ignorant, by

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all means instruct them: convince them of their danger, and they will avoid it: shew them how inseparably ruin is connected with impenitence, and they dare not stand still and perish: make them certain that there is indeed a Heaven, and a Hell; that virtue ends in the one, and vice in the other, as naturally as health does in life, and sickness in death; and relief is not more acceptable to the oppressed, rest to the weary, or light to the blind, than a Saviour will be to them. But, for God's sake, for theirs, for your own, dally not a moment with their reason, while you may drag them where you will by their feelings. Nothing can be more capricious than the former, or more soft and pliable than the latter. By speaking to the heart and conscience we have some chance of success; by speaking only to the understanding, none at all.

## DISCOURSE IV. 155

The heart is the life of the moral, as well as of the natural system. Here we must seek for the motives, and springs, and principles of action, and, according as selfish or liberal, pronounce concerning them. Once get possession of the heart, and you may soften and subdue, mould and melt, your hearers at pleasure. Secure this pass, and the victory is yours: till then your strongest efforts will misgive, your best-laid stratagems prove abortive. But how can they expect to accomplish this arduous enterprise, who never attempt it? I can very well see the strength of your reasoning, without feeling it; but till you raise certain emotions in my bosom, and awaken my conscience, you cannot surely produce that strong, permanent, and operative principle, which, in order to my being a Christian, must reduce my appetites, and regulate my life.



There is a keen and delicate sensibility, a great and willing warmth, a growing vigour of sentiment and expression, which marks the strain of true persuasion, and which I will not hesitate to pronounce the very Soul of Pulpit Eloquence. While the Preacher finds his conceptions heated and enlarged with the great doctrines and discoveries of the Gospel, every grateful affection burns within him, transports ravish his heart, and raptures fire his tongue: divine light flashes around him, his ideas brighten as his passions glow, sentiment swells with the vigour of imagination, and the accuracy of his judgement keeps pace with the ardour of his heart. How pitiful, on the comparison, must not they be, even in their own eyes, who can dwell on these affecting subjects without betraying one pious emotion! Yet the Professor of Mathematics shall treat of quantity and number of lines and

angles, superficies and solids, with as much, if not more, vivacity and concern, than HE who virtually comes from heaven to tell us how we must be saved. Such dull, insipid, criminal coolness is the more fantastic in men of science, that the most ignorant can see through the hollowness and affectation of it. One or two, perhaps, in a few congregations, may discover the beauties of a fine composition; but, most assuredly, the whole of every congregation, at all times, in all places, on all occasions, despise and execrate a dead, inactive DELIVERY.

I have done with one reflection from what has been said; a reflection, in which all of us are deeply and equally concerned.

What think you the decisive point will be, on which our final sentence shall turn? Can the great Judge of

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the world proceed on the variable opinion of blind erroneous mortals? Trust me, a fate on which so much depends, in which so many are involved, turns on no such precarious tenure. No; the opportunities you now enjoy, and the use you make of these opportunities, must either exalt you to Heaven, or plunge you into Hell. Do you live within the joyful sound of peace, yet meditate rebellion against the God of Peace? Has the glorious proclamation of forgiveness reached your ears without melting your hearts? Can you hear, unmoved, a kind compassionate DIVINITY commanding you in human language TO LIVE? Do ye cease to tremble, while he SWEARS with a voice which shakes the heavens, that "he has no pleasure in your death?" Must He expostulate, must his Son die, must his Spirit strive, must his Grace operate, in vain? And dare you, after

## DISCOURSE IV. 159

all this, expect to escape unpunished? that a wicked life should terminate in heaven? that an impenitent heart can ever be happy? Forgive me, Humanity, the truth is awful, but it must be told. However gaily, however smoothly, you may now glide down the stream of life, "as the Lord liveth, "and as thy soul liveth, there is but "a step between thee and death." Do ye not frequently hear a whisper of misery, even while the tide of external bliss is full and overflowing? Is there not something within you, which, like the sudden shock of a palsy, damps your guilty joys, and, with all the blandishments of luxury, and all the parade of magnificence, puts pleasure wholly out of your power? Does not the past fill you with remorse, the present with anxiety, and all to come with uncertainty and terror? Do you think to brave the workings of your own mind, as you brave the world's



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“dread laugh;” or that Conscience will not, some time or other, start from her slumber, and read you such a lecture as shall go to the bottom of your heart? As well may yonder criminals in irons attempt to forget their doom, while the day of execution draweth nigh. Believe me, it is but a moment when life shall burst like a bubble in the air, and all eternity unbolt on your whole soul, and rage around you in one wide inextinguishable flame.—Yes, you may now flaunt, and sneer, and congratulate yourselves, as much as you please: but when the sky reddens above, and the earth reels beneath; when the mighty waters foam, and sport with the laws of Nature, and the astonished universe shakes to the centre; when thunders roar, that awaken the dead, and lightnings flash, that darken the sun and set the elements on fire; when the wrath of the Almighty, like a hurricane, blows from

## DISCOURSE IV. 161

every point of the compass, and Nature groans her last.—Speak out, O sinner! say, to what class of mankind would ye then belong; on which hand of the throne be placed; to what region have your lot assigned?

Do ye think, now, the Christian would exchange situations with this, though bribed by the profer of a crown? No; the world is not rich enough to buy his peace, large enough to hold his heart, or strong enough to balk his expectations. The sun shines in brighter rays, the flowers spring in sweeter hues, the birds chaunt diviner melody, to him than to others; and all Nature is clad in charms, of which no heart but his, or such as his, is susceptible. Inspect his retirement: he has nothing to conceal; for honesty wears not the badge of secrecy.—View him by himself—humble in prosperity—resigned in adversity—neither impotent

## 162 DISCOURSE IV.

in sickness, nor petulant in health—not haughty in affluence, nor abject in want. View him in society—as open as candour, as respectable as goodness, as cheerful as conscious integrity, can make him; rejecting no gain consistent with justice, no pleasure consistent with innocence, no plea consistent with humanity.—In captivity free, in poverty rich, independent in place, illustrious in obscurity. Happy man! though the world should think thee great; though riches blazon not thy pride, nor titles gild thy name; though destitute of all that is splendid; whatever is desirable or precious in life is thine.

Here every thing is wrapped up in dark disguise: Providence frowns, the world smiles, sinners rejoice, and saints mourn. Sure such a scene cannot last for ever: a little time, for certain, must reverse it; and when the curtain drops, when the mask is torn from

## DISCOURSE IV. 163

every face, thy dignity shall break forth as the light, and all thy ignominious hardships be forgotten. That day, which puts a period to the triumph of the wicked, is only the beginning of thine. Opening heavens, descending hosts, angels on wing, saints in waiting, quick and dead rushing together, the Judge seated, and the books unfolded, shall then be the most ravishing sights that ever thine eyes beheld; the sound of the trumpet, the crashing of thunder, and the voice from the throne, the sweetest music that ever saluted thine ears. Rejoice, O Christian! and be exceeding glad in the anticipation of that blessed event: for, when the whole material system totters from its basis; when all that illumines nature is blotted from the sky; when the flames of the upper and nether worlds meet, and mingle their fury and violence together; when nothing in earth or heaven sustains the shock, but the throne of God;



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I see thee upheld by that word which  
gives birth and dissolution to worlds—  
I hear thy triumphant voice, unabashed  
by the tumult of things, swelling the  
fullest and finest note that trembles on  
the lips of the blessed.—AMEN.

“Blessing, and glory, and wisdom,  
“and thanksgiving, and honour,  
“and power, and might, be unto  
“our God for ever and ever.”

184 DISCOURSE IV.

I see thee upheld by that word which  
gives birth and dissolution to worlds—  
I hear thy triumphant voice, unobscured  
by the tumult of things, swelling the  
tallest and truest note that trembles on

DISCOURSE V.

Blessing and wisdom,  
and thanksgiving, and honour,  
**DELICACIES,**  
and power, and might, be unto  
our God forever and ever.

OF THE

FINER AFFECTIONS.

# DISCOURSE V.

ON THE

Delicacies of the Finest Affections.

DISCOURSE V.

2 SAM. 1. 16.

I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:  
very pleasant hast thou been unto me; thy  
love to me was wonderful, passing the love  
of women.

WAS ever the language of gra-  
- titude more soft and natural?  
Did ever elegy warble in sweeter strains?  
How happily were the minds of these  
two amiable and illustrious youths formed  
for ties of the closest and most endear-  
ing kind! And so uniformly great and  
generous is their mutual friendship, that  
a parallel instance can hardly be quoted  
from human story.

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# DISCOURSE V.

ON THE

Delicacies of the Finer Affections.

2 SAM. i. 26.

*I am distressed for Thee, my brother Jonathan:  
very pleasant hast thou been unto me; thy  
love to me was wonderful, passing the love  
of women.*

**W**AS ever the language of gratitude more soft and natural! Did ever elegy warble in sweeter strains! How happily were the minds of these two amiable and illustrious youths formed for ties of the closest and most endearing kind! And so uniformly great and generous is their mutual friendship, that a parallel instance can hardly be quoted from human story.



Though David's extraction was obscure, and his occupation servile; though professedly fired with the noblest emulation to excel in every thing manly and daring; though marked by the nobles of Israel, shooting from the shade, and dazzling the multitude by the unexpected splendour of his prowess, with sentiments of envy and dislike; though he aspired at mingling his blood with majesty, and grasped at royalty itself; strange as it may seem in these degenerate times, the HEIR APPARENT is, from first to last, his bosom friend: for Jonathan loved him as his own soul, entered into a league of lasting and mutual amity with him, clad him in his own wearing-apparel, "even to his sword, his bow, and his girdle," preferred his love to paternal authority, delivered him from the fury of a bloody tyrant, and relinquished in his favour whatever charms and captivates the mind of man.

# DISCOURSE V. 169

The generosity of David, though less splendid, was not less sincere. Few have it in their power to do justice to the natural overflowings of a full heart; and gratitude, in narrow circumstances, will ever be liable to suspicion. But Jonathan, whose soul was originally large and liberal, thought better of his Friend; and, conscious of possessing his confidence intire, knew the utmost extent of his views, his wishes, and his wants. David, who had a proper value for the superior worth and greatness of Jonathan's heart, found the charms of a crown, and all the rankling jealousies of competition, unable to debauch him; and that here he might lodge, with safety and satisfaction, the various sighs and anxieties of his own. But; when the decisive crisis arrives, which exchanges his Friend for a kingdom, he feels a void within him, which the whole creation cannot supply.—“ I am  
“ distressed for Thee, my brother Jo-  
“ nathan : very pleasant hast thou been

## 170 DISCOURSE VI

“unto me; thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.”

—VERY PLEASANT HAST THOU BEEN UNTO ME, is an idea which takes possession of his whole mind. What exquisite felicities have I not shared in thy company! how many blessings through thy ministration! While others soothed my soaring fancy with the prostituted song of flattery, thy voice was always the voice of truth. Amidst repeated plots and conspiracies to destroy me, thy heart remained pure, thy attachment unshaken. Under all the fatigues of persecution, and all the anxieties of banishment, a settled conviction of thy fidelity and tenderness cheered my restless nights, lessened the toils of the day, and reconciled me in some measure to all the horrors and hardships of inhospitable deserts.

—THY LOVE TO ME WAS WONDERFUL, PASSING THE LOVE OF WOMEN.

## DISCOURSE IV. 171

People in opposite stations make few mutual concessions; and the rich, who know more, and should think better, are uniformly just as partial to self-love as the poor. But, rude as my mind, and rough as my manners then were; though I knew nothing either about the ceremonies of courts, or the delicacies of polite life; though come from the lowest departments of society, with all the little harmless inclegancies of a peasant; I was singled out, and preferred, in thy fond estimation, to all the hypocrits that surrounded the throne. So strong and ardent was thy affectionate regard, so generous and disinterested thy offices of kindness, so liberal and unexpected the tender partialities of thy heart to me, that women with all their sensibilities could neither feel nor love like thee. Their softest and keenest sensations bear no comparison: the most delicate and refined attachments, of which their natures are susceptible,



have nothing in them so sweet and gentle, so endearing and divine, as ours had.

—I AM DISTRESSED FOR THEE, MY BROTHER JONATHAN. Trust me, the most splendid pageantry gives little ease to a bleeding heart; and every exterior thing is much too dear when bought at the price of a Friend. Away with the cold suggestions of selfishness! Every supposable compensation is wretched. To a sentimental mind the whole earth yields nothing so precious and desirable. The comforts of philosophy are vague and desultory; for the heart no sooner bursts with affliction, than the head reels and staggers with uncertainty. Even Religion, friend as she is to the miserable, still points to patience as my only remedy. Alas! whatever most charmed in our happier days, I now recollect with regret. Indeed thou hast left me, MY BROTHER, in the most popular circumstances, in possession of the fairest prospects: but the former I do

## DISCOURSE V. 173

not feel, and the latter I cannot but dis-  
 relish: for what is all the fullness that  
 floats in the rear of Majesty, without  
 thee?—Thou art mute, and I am  
 dead to the bursts of universal ap-  
 plause.—What signifies a palace, whilst  
 thou art not there?—Thy absence is a  
 gulph, in which all that is fond to my  
 fancy, all that is dear to my heart, all  
 that is valuable in life, is absorbed.

ALL human happiness, or misery, is  
 more or less connected with the various  
 workings of affection or attachment.  
 Wherever these branch out in society,  
 according to the different modifications  
 they assume, and the objects in which  
 they terminate, we unavoidably suffer  
 or enjoy. And is it not worth while,  
 for that reason, to turn our attention  
 from things merely speculative, to that  
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## 174 DISCOURSE VI

so unequal to the subject, that some apology may, perhaps, be thought necessary for attempting it. It would, however, be strange indeed, if, with some sensibility, and a very chequered life, I could have been thus long, and thus much in the midst of misfortunes without my share: and since, in this as well as in every other thing, he is most likely to speak best who feels most, I promise myself a candid hearing, will depend on Heaven, and not despair of success.

The mechanism of our mental frame is wisely and wonderfully minute. It is astonishing, with what invariable regularity the human mind performs her several functions, and how exactly and uniformly she corresponds to the place she fills. Because the scene we now occupy is so crowded with objects, alternately pleasing and obnoxious, and so liable withall to the vicissitude of light and shade, we possess the double capacity of enjoying the former, and en-

during the latter, and the nerves of our bodies are not more necessary to apprise us of corporeal, than the sensibilities of our minds to protect us from intellectual injuries. These, like so many sentinels faithful to their post, watch over the welfare of the system, and give immediate alarm on every approach of danger.

Thus we are severally possessed, by a kind of natural and hereditary right, of sensibility sufficient for all the purposes of self-preservation. Nor are there wanting, among the best of human beings, who roundly and loudly complain of having much more than they can well manage. Their affections kindle at every thing, embrace every thing, are torn by every thing, that comes near them. The least indisposition of body, the smallest accident in life, a restless night, a frightful dream, or a cloudy sky, awakens all their anx-

## 176 DISCOURSE V.

ieties, fills their heads with disagreeable ideas, and their hearts with painful sensations, ruffles the sweetest temper, and envelopes every circumstance however comfortable, and every prospect however promising, with which they are connected, in one thick, foreboding, impenetrable gloom. But these are spirits of a superior class, whom, perhaps, no state of mortality could better accommodate; whose sensations are too exquisitely framed for life, too fine and delicate for the "thousand shocks," which, in the present reeling and distracted maze of madness and impiety, must yet be felt; who, take them all in all, are much less qualified for earth than heaven.

Such a flexibility and temperature of mind, though in most instances inconvenient, and in some a curse to individuals, is, however, of unspeakable advantage to society at large, and con-

## DISCOURSE V. 177

frequently a blessing to the whole world. In this soil, and in this alone, all the social principles and feelings, which in the various orders, configurations, and harmonies of polished life, rise and run into so many beautiful and surprising combinations, spring up, and ripen into full maturity: and, though unavoidable excrescences may here and there "encumber the ground," the wheat is not the less genuine, that it is frequently mixed with tares. Generosity and benevolence, in particular, these two kindred virtues, which so habitually dignify and sweeten the life of man, are nowhere to be found, but in the bountiful donations of a warm heart. Here all the silken cords of mutual affection and esteem, which bind mankind together under so many forms, and in so many ways, may be traced to their source: and hence also we must resolve that peculiar elasticity of mind, which so instinctively revolts at the prospect of



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dependence and misfortune. It would seem as if Nature intended that all her children should act respectively for themselves, and with that view assigned each of them a separate department. True sensibility is incompatible with servility and abjection of every kind, which, in some cases, may have an appearance of pride and discontent, but which is always an infallible mark of true intrinsic dignity and worth. Indeed art and design have many shapes, can put on what form they please. When ambition pollutes the heart with extravagant wishes and desires; when fictitious wants are felt, and imaginary disappointments anticipated; complaints may be uttered with temerity, and Providence taxed with partiality. In that case, gentleness degenerates into melancholy, spirit into impatience, and the finest sentiments of the heart catch an edge which heightens every calamity, and reflect a hue which tinges every

## DISCOURSE V. 179

object with sadness. Still, however, as every individual must be supposed best acquainted with the most distressful circumstances in his own case, we must, and will almost every where, feel with the sufferer, though we cannot always excuse him. The truth is, our sympathies would be strangely circumscribed, did we pity those only, who have no share in their own misfortunes. While then the gradations are so numerous, so delicate and imperceptible; while merit, in this mortifying scale, is so incapable of true discrimination; and while it appears so difficult to act with propriety, I own I am clearly for giving full scope to our feelings. We cannot check a single impulse on humanity without danger. Let us pity all; and it must go hard but we shall pity some who deserve it.

But refinement here is unnecessary. Nature has secured a union among the

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feeling part of the species by the most indissoluble bonds. Their sentiments are so equally alive, their dispositions so tempered alike, and their whole frames so happily made and moulded for each other, that the instant of mutual intelligence often unites them for ever: and we may boast of wisdom, reason, or reflection, as much as we please; but, in fact, the frequent ebullitions of the heart and affections have very little to do with either; for, taking life at an average, impulse will be found, perhaps, the most busy and prevalent principle in it.

Are the attachments of the heart then subject to no regulation, no controul? Not much, I verily believe; but among a certain select party of enlightened minds, who add superior sense to superior feeling, and who, by habits of education, by the force of philosophy, or the spirit of religion, have brought

## DISCOURSE V. 181

sentiment, in some degree at least, in subordination to judgement. Indiscretion, it must be owned, does sometimes the same irreparable mischief among our feelings, that it does among our actions. On minds of a certain cast and texture, every appearance of distress, whether real or fictitious, makes deep and durable impressions. Feelings so extremely susceptible and exquisite must give vast and constant uneasiness; and yet to chastise them, which, I doubt, is a very difficult matter, would only be exchanging better for worse: for, when we see them checked, as in the case of the profligate, the blunders and irregularities they produce are endless and insufferable. I know there will be certain words conjured up, on this occasion, which have been long chimed at random, as if, like some sounds that are supposed possessed of an occult and unintelligible quality, they charmed by repetition. In truth, PRUDENCE,



however confidently tossed about among the dull, phlegmatic, and selfish, as guardian of human kind, wherever feeling is concerned, is rather a nominal than a real virtue: And when once, if ever, it does gets possession of an enlarged and sentimental understanding, is not the havock, which it makes among the whole assemblage of social aptitudes, at once incredible and mortifying? For what, indeed, are the jealousies, suspicions, and refinements without end, which invade and molest the retirements of relative and domestic life, but natures, originally open and generous, perverted by the cool, insipid dictates of a mercenary interested world? the workings of artificial passions.

Ye sons of Reason and Philosophy, who mistake apathy for dignity, and laugh, with much unmeaning coolness and confidence, at the fervent sallies of ardent and ingenuous spirits, say,

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what pleasures can you boast of equal to theirs? It is the foible of the species to complain. Pride prompts us to think all enjoyment our due, and all suffering imposition. We seldom give ourselves the trouble to reflect, that both are inseparable from a state of probation, that without suffering we could not enjoy, and that the one is necessary and destined only in order to the other. Besides, there is not a sympathy in the human heart, which does not give a great deal more pleasure than pain. I speak not of those restless and uneasy sensations which are totally selfish, and which proceed intirely from petulance, impatience, and envy. These are not the sympathies of nature, but merely the workings of artificial passions. All feelings that center in ourselves must rankle and corrode, because our happiness lies not in the suppression, but expansion of them: and some minds are formed with an original propensity to

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fasten with avidity on every object around them. The inconveniences and shocks, to which this peculiarity of constitution subjects them; bear, after all, but little proportion to the many exquisite delights, which the exercise of it occasions. We forget the blessings, only when we feel the evils, of life: but there are certain intervals of suffering, in which all the sentimental at least agree, that one moment's enjoyment is often compensation sufficient for a whole age of pain.

But what has all this sensibility to do with life? Every man is sufficiently busied about his own affairs. At this rate, the rich were an everlasting prey to the poor, universal indulgence would relax the sinews of industry, and community of interest banish all ideas of property and distinction from the earth. Ye Men of the World, I dispute not with you. Indeed, to urge the indulgence of a

## DISCOURSE V. 185

feeling heart against a head crammed with ideas and aphorisms of oeconomy, would be a very idle and unequal contest. Did I set the same value on this worthless life, and the worthless appendages of it, that ye do, I should adopt your system, speak your language, and applaud your measures, with all my heart. But are you aware how far these same wise and frugal maxims extend? Besides excusing all the fraudulent circumventions and deceit which tincture the busy and active, all the artifice and meanness by which Avarice accumulates her stores, and all the brutish stubbornness which marks that callous race, who live and die “without natural affection;” do ye not see, that along with the whole series of liberal and agreeable sensations, the most endearing pleasures both of body and mind, happiness, and heaven, are all discarded and bartered for nothing? If you cast but a look beyond the present pitiful spot,



it chills you with horror. Yet die you must; nor do ye know how soon. And how can you expect a treasure in heaven, who are so much, and so ardently, devoted to a treasure on earth? Verily, I much mistake, if selfish and mercenary minds have the smallest chance of happiness, either here or hereafter. As for you, who wish to survive all the little paltry distinctions, which wealth creates and multiplies in the present fordid and melancholy system, and expect to be yet happy in the social excursions of a benevolent mind, when the world and the ways of the world are forgotten; observe the woes and wretchedness of mankind, and give vent to your whole souls. Trust me, every symptom of sorrow you see, and every sigh you hear, where imposition is not indisputable, has a claim on your sympathy at least. All your happiness to come will be proportionate to your present pity, and every generous affection you

## DISCOURSE V. 187

now stifle, a most certain diminution of it. But to live in the conviction of these sentiments, and yet bury yourselves in the acquisition of trifles, at the same time that all the dreadful realities of futurity rush on your view, is insensibility, stupidity, petrification, with a vengeance.

It must be acknowledged, that, though sensibility, on the whole, affords full as much pleasure as pain, exceptions, in particular cases, are by no means uncommon. Warm hearts are always least cautious in their preferences, and, for that reason, suffer most. Objects of real worth are not very frequent. We are often dazzled by the mere blaze of a tinselled outside; and though an artful impostor, like a glow-worm, allures and bewilders us at a distance, a nearer view soon undeceives us. The discovery will cost us a pang, but that pang may save us thousands: for, depend upon it,

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things are all ordered with so much wisdom, and so much benignity, that the heart never gets a probe, never bleeds, in vain. Indeed, the great and difficult art in this, as well as in most other things in life, is discrimination.

Similarity in parts, pursuits, in talents, in tempers, in every thing, conciliates affection, and misleads us: but, assuredly, true Friendship implies many sensations, which vicious minds cannot feel, and a thousand sentiments, which they do not possess; for it is a sacred union of souls, in which all the qualities of the head and the heart are happily and equally blended. Here probity, and all the purest principles of action, are not only necessary, but a reciprocal conviction of them is essential to reciprocal trust. Happiness has no being where safety is uncertain. To feel delight, supposes absolute security and ease; and I dare not put any thing in his

## DISCOURSE V. 189

power, in whom I could not chearfully confide my all. How should a bad man be a good friend? For he, whose sense of duty is not sacred and universal, will sport with the greatest as well as the least: and they risk their lives for nothing, who lie at his mercy whose character is doubtful. Virtue and honour are the only things about human nature, on which there can be any solid and lasting dependence. Besides, in such a connection as this, a breach, whatever should be the consequences, must take place: and the human affections, like barbed arrows, can never be extracted or recalled without the most insufferable anguish. The perfidy of an apparent friend is the last truth that strikes a feeling mind with conviction: and, when every thing conspires to realize it, good God! with what a weight does it fall on his aching heart! His officious memory, by the strangest coincidence of infe-



licities in the world, chaces and hunts up that only which, of all other things, he is most solicitous to suppress. Under such a disappointment, who can tell what he suffers? He breathes vexation, looks distraction, and melancholy haunts, perhaps, and overwhelms him while he lives.

Principle is the foundation, on which generosity, which is the structure of friendship, must rest. Principle without generosity is bigotry; and generosity without principle, mere profusion. Were I to give a definition of Friendship, I would call it a tacit, but heart-felt, junction of two congenial minds, in which they mutually and implicitly engage to sacrifice their interests and inclinations to one another; to put up with every inconvenience, to encounter every hardship, which a cause so deeply and dearly interesting to both may require: for, whatever

## DISCOURSE V. 191

talents a man may possess, if he has not generosity enough to master his passions, and relinquish self-love; you may take him for a companion if you will, but I pity you from my soul if you make him a friend. The imperfections of friends are often too palpable to be over-looked, but never too gross to be forgiven; for our attachment ends, the moment we harbour a grudge. Every man has foibles, which adhere as closely to his manners, as the shadow does to his body; and his taste must be wonderfully fastidious indeed, who cannot pardon in others what he feels so frequently in himself. I see a thousand things in my friend, and he in me, which we could both very well spare, but which, because not essentially connected with intellectual and moral worth, are beneath serious correction, and rather a subject of merriment than censure. Mutual happiness must be the ultimate end of all our attentions,

affiduties, and anxieties. As our intercourse refers to interest as well as to sentiment, the least degree of reservation is criminal. We must now stop at nothing. Our correspondence extends to all we are, and all we have, and equally involves our smallest and greatest concerns. We must have no cares, no sorrows, no sympathies, which are not common; for what can we dread from his knowledge, in whose bosom our very hearts are secure? Every spark of suspicion is injurious to the faith we owe him. In the most unpromising circumstances he is entitled to absolute credit; and nothing less than full demonstration can justify the least doubt to his disadvantage. People who deal much in secrecy and concealment, are seldom honest. Hell is bottomed in mystery; and nothing, so like Heaven as Friendship is, can have the least connection with shade. Candour is open as the face of day, and a heart without disguise is a stranger to disguise.

## DISCOURSE V. 193

But there may be principle and generosity too, where delicacy is wanting, than which, however, nothing is more essential to this elegant and sublime connection. The mind often catches a certain temper and complexion from certain positions, in which she is flung by education, constitution, or misfortunes. Then peevishness, petulance, and debility, are unavoidable. A look, a word, a gesture, a cast of the countenance, or a tone of the voice, may hurt her in the tenderest part, which, in other circumstances, she might not feel. We cannot regard him as a friend, whose inmost wishes and desires we are not careful to explore and supply. The least idea of inferiority would diminish the preference we give him: our closest intimacies must still retain a mixture of deference and respect: for friendship is the most venerable, as well as the most amiable of things; nor can the price, at which we value one another, be



lowered in a single instance without danger. Gross familiarities beget disgust; and rudeness of every kind constantly instigates resentment. He cannot be your friend, who is either offended with oddities which you cannot help, or puts you to the blush where an explanation is impracticable. I can hear the pointless raillery of coxcombs with perfect indifference, and the dull insipid censures of low minds as though I heard them not; but the flight of a friend goes to the bottom of my soul, and the least appearance of a sneer from him sets my whole heart bleeding. The most frivolous improprieties may, at times, infringe the dignity of friendship. That divine sensibility, which gives a lustre to all its parts, and sheds a softness over all its scenes, renders it so very tender to the touch, that the least shock at the extremities is also felt in the centre. It possesses, besides, a simplicity, of which the cunning have no

## DISCOURSE V. 195

conception; and a chasteness and purity, to which the vulgar and vicious dare not aspire.

Without resolution, there is no truth, no dignity, no worth, in the human character. Some tempers are so exceedingly flexible and fluctuating, that within any given space of time you are almost sure of finding them at every point of the compass. Individuals differ not more from one another, than they do from themselves at different times, and in different situations. Their humours, tastes, attachments, and aversions, like the fashions of the world and the vicissitudes of nature, are in eternal rotation. Among the various objects around them, they choose and relinquish, like and dislike, at random. You are never certain of them a moment, because you never know how or where to find them. Their minds are perpetually on wing, hopping from trifle to trifle, but settle no where;

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with at last, as if exhausted in the giddy circle, they sink down in all the dull insignificance of listless stupefaction. And would you confide in those, whom every knave may seduce to your ruin? How many fools can trample on the most hallowed sympathies of the heart, and sacrifice all the refinements of the most exalted natures to the mean indulgence of low-born humour! There is a restless solicitude in mankind to get acquainted with the most secret and intimate concerns of others. We must repel, if we can, this busy inquisitive spirit, and, whatever we do with our own affairs, maintain those of a friend inviolate. Let him always find us, if not in the same temper, at least in the same principles of untainted probity and uprightness, in which he left us. To act wisely and well in this delicate capacity, our views and purposes should be single and uniform: no accident should shake our confidence, no danger

intercept our communion, no misfortune  
 chill our affections. The reprehensions  
 of love, though sometimes necessary,  
 are never ill to bear. We must both  
 reject and with-hold that unmanly ad-  
 dulation, which marks the intimacies of  
 children and fools. Mean and vicious  
 compliances are a tribute, which true  
 friendship never exacts. Indeed, what-  
 ever truckles to the trappings of exterior  
 greatness, cringes to the tinsel'd trum-  
 pery of wealth, or bows to the gaudy  
 plumage of fashion, is altogether incom-  
 patible with this endearing and dignified  
 form.

Thus an elegant and noble friendship  
 has something in it too chaste and sanc-  
 tified for those of impure and polluted  
 sentiments, too sublime for the selfish,  
 too refined for the low, too weighty for  
 the weak. And, setting those aside,  
 with innumerable other deductions that  
 must be made, the delicacies of the



finer affections will be found the peculiar privilege of a few. My God! what a rare, what a valuable acquisition is HE, to whom, at all times, we may unbosom ourselves without reserve, who shares our sufferings, participates our joys, and, in all the vicissitudes of a vain and visionary life, mingles his feelings, affections, and tears, with ours! His heart is tender as the stem of the rising plant, and his feelings are habitually soft and salutary as the breath of heaven. He regards our infirmities with a pitying eye, and even looks on our crimes, though not without abhorrence, yet with reluctance and forgiveness. All his corrections are mingled with a tender severity, all his caresses with a prudent reserve. Whatever is great or virtuous in our characters, he regards not with the common cold approbation of others, but with a kind, self-interested concern, which he can seldom either stifle or conceal. Is he

## DISCOURSE VI. 199

rich? Dread not the approach of want; for his purse is as much yours as his heart: and the world can neither laugh him out of his generosity, nor chill him into churlishness. You share not his bounty, but his all; for friendship neither gives nor takes, but lives in full possession. His knowledge brightens your understanding, his taste refines your affections, and his elegance polishes your manners. View him in all the attitudes of human life, and put his good-nature to the trial when you will; and you shall not once find him cold, or wavering, or dilatory, in your interest. He neither loads you with compliment, nor tires you with ceremony; but his deeds are uniformly kind and benevolent. Having imbibed the true spirit of religion, he forms himself on its dictates, and makes it the governing principle of his life. His whole soul breathes the dispositions it inspires; his expectations swell with the glories it ex-

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hibits, and his manners insensibly acquire that amiable purity and elevation which imparts. There is no action in which he is not guided by its direction; no situation in which he feels not its influence. — As a master, he is meek and condescending — as a servant, diligent and faithful — as a relation, affectionate and bountiful — as a son, submissive and obliging — as a father, fond but not foolish; prudent, but not parsimonious; neither so indulgent as to encourage petulance and impertinence, or so severe as to create coolness and aversion.

Such is the man of experience and principle, whose friendship is a treasure more valuable than both Indies. There is something about him, wonderfully soothing and consolatory; a certain charm in all he does and says, that strangely softens and ravishes every sympathetic mind. In his presence the labouring breast is relieved, and the swelling heart gets vent;

## DISCOURSE IV. 201

the saddest soul becomes cheerful; and  
 - sorrow dies away; in short, dismenters  
 - into the spirit of whatever affects us, with-  
 - a sensibility and eagerness peculiar to  
 - himself; his partial imagination broods  
 - continually over our interest; our image,  
 - dearer to him than life, is constantly  
 - uppermost in his thoughts; and his  
 - heart, like a string never out of tune,  
 - like an instrument ever true to the touch  
 - of a master, is invariably in unison with  
 - ours.

O Friendship, Friendship, thou best  
 blessing that the best of beings bestows  
 - on the best of mortals! thou fairest  
 - and fullest image of heaven and im-  
 - mortality! without thee the world is  
 - dark, and life a dream: thy voice is the  
 - language, the harmony, the mutual  
 - gratulations, of congenial and senti-  
 - mental spirits; thy presence, the light,  
 - the comfort, the glory of humanity.  
 - Peace and prosperity dwell with thee;

health and happiness are in thy habitation; hope and joy, with a thousand smiling and nameless endearments, sparkle by thy side; and DIVINITY beams benignant wherever thou art.

This, I shall be told, does all mighty well for speculation, but is too much wrought; will by no means apply to life. I allow with regret, because I have seen and felt a thousand times, that the world wears a very different complexion. But say, what a motly composition would that picture of Friendship be, that should be taken from a state of society, in which commerce compresses the heart in proportion as it unfolds the understanding; where the amiable softnesses of the feminine, and the prompt generosity of the masculine character, are either lost in dissipation, or ingulphed in interest; and where all that escapes the pestilential blast of villainy and selfishness, and does

honour to the human name; bleeds and dies at the desolating shrine of Luxury! Think it not impracticable, though here so seldom seen, and so little realized. Exceptions of that kind can only arise from a connivance with an apposite temper. I hold out a STANDARD, indeed, at which the whole generation of sottish minds will unavoidably and uniformly grumble and boggle exceedingly.\*

\* That noble spirit of Enthusiasm, so essential to excellence in arts, in science, in morals, will ever be considered as extravagant and romantic by the bulk of mankind, and reprobated in proportion as it clashes with their interest. The heart, for the most part, gives law to principle, as well as to action. Under whatever modification of self-love our ideas of right and wrong are formed, we naturally dispute the propriety of every thing that runs counter to our wishes; for, put on what appearances, and act what part we will, our motions in the magic drama of life are strangely mechanical; and habit is the great master-spring by which human nature plays so many antic tricks, and struts into so many fan-



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The truth is, it was not exhibited for them; I am much too old, and too well acquainted with my own powers, to think of humanizing those who are not so much savages by nature as by art. Let us see what I can do for human nature in its natural shapes. Were Plato or Epictetus, not to mention Diogenes, to mount a rostrum in the middle of the Royal Exchange, and there, with all the ardour and eloquence of ancient times, deliver their well-known maxims of justice and friendship; there is not a Jew, and I doubt not many Christians, in that place, who, to say the least, would not treat our philosophers and their philosophy with sovereign contempt. Our theory, it is acknowledged by all, is infinitely superior to theirs; but—our practice,

O Moderns, what a falling-off is there!

How far humanity may yet sink beneath itself; should the world last much longer, is a question mortifying enough to the pride of man. For my own part, I never compare the ancients and moderns together, but the disparity shocks me to the soul; and I seldom think of the disparity without lifting up my eyes to Heaven, and muttering to myself—**ALAS! WHAT FOLLIES ARE WE!**

## DISCOURSE V. 125

them not, however, violate the sacred name of Friendship, by applying it so wantonly as they do to their petty civilities, and I ask no more. But high as it may, and must appear to them, is it too high for human nature? Is it beyond the reach of religion? You will not say that it is. Besides, reduce it as low as you please, the way of the world will always be beneath it; and shall Virtue stoop to the meanest, because the greatest of mankind seldom or never rise to her?

But who is HE in yon meek, majestic, amicable form, whose aspect softens with kindness, whose eyes stream with compassion, whose voice vibrates pity to our guilty race, on whom the united attention of heaven and earth is fixed with astonishment? Has not the blessed Jesus illustrated and exemplified this divine idea in its utmost sublimity and magnitude? Does not Friendship assume

in him a living and visible likeness, and display, in the lowly paths of humility and abasement, all her softest, gentlest, most attractive graces? Did he not quit the Father's bosom, sacrifice the blandishments of sense, and relinquish life itself in this glorious cause? and is he not in friendship, as well as in every other excellence of a moral nature, the acknowledged Pattern of our imitation? The strong and emphatic sentiments of the most benevolent kind, with which his own breast was so richly replenished, excluded every tincture of harshness from his character and manners. Let his compassionate concern for Jerusalem, the grave of Lazarus, and the garden of Gethsemane, describe for me the exquisite delicacy of his nature, the strength of his affections, and the tenderness of his heart. He never felt a wish, never said a word, never did a deed, which was not thoroughly consonant to our highest conceptions of humanity; for he came not

## DISCOURSE IV. 207

to quash the many generous sympathies and emotions which flutter in the heart of man, but to cherish and extend them, to divest the human character of its roughness, and give it a cast and polish which it knew not before. And does not his Gospel, to this very day, heighten every soft and tender affection, warm every social and liberal impulse, refine every spring in the texture and frame of our minds, that lives and trembles to the touch of compassion?

Yes; Religion is the daughter of Heaven, parent of all our virtues, and guardian of all our pleasures; who alone gives peace and contentment, divests the heart of care and the life of trouble, bursts on the mind a flood of joy, and sheds unmingled and perpetual sunshine in the virtuous breast. By her the spirits of darkness are banished the earth, and ministers of grace thicken unseen the scenes of mortality. She pro-



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motes love and good-will among men, lifts up the head that hangs down, heals the wounded spirit, dissipates the gloom of sorrow, sweetens the cup of affliction, blunts the sting of death, and wherever seen, or felt, or heard, breathes around her an everlasting spring. Religion raises men above themselves; irreligion sinks them beneath the brutes: the one makes them angels, the other makes them devils: THIS binds them down to a poor pitiable speck of perishable earth; THAT opens up a vista to the skies, and lets loose all the principles of an immortal mind among the glorious objects of an eternal world.

Lift up your head, O Christian, and look forward to yon calm unclouded regions of mercy, unsullied by vapours, unruffled by storms, where Friendship, the loveliest form in heaven, never dies, never changes, never cools! Ere long thou shalt burst this brittle cage of confinement, break through the fetters of

## DISCOURSE V. 209

mortality, spring to life, and mingle with the skies. Corruption has but a limited duration. Happiness is even now in the bud; a few days, or weeks, or months, or years at most, and that bud shall be fully blown. Here Virtue droops under a thousand pressures; but, like the earth with the returning spring, shall then renew her youth, renew her verdure, rise and reign in everlasting and undiminished lustre. It does not signify what thy prospects now are; what thy situation now is. In the present condition, thy heart, indeed, may sob and bleed its last, before thou shalt meet with one who has either the generosity to relieve, or the humanity to pity thee. Thou hast, however, in the compassionate Parent of Nature, a most certain resource in the deepest extremity. Cast thine eyes but a little beyond this strange, mysterious, and perplexing scene, which at present intercepts thy views of futurity. Behold a bow stamped

# 110 DISCOURSE VI.

in the darkest cloud that lowers in the face of heaven, and the whole surrounding hemisphere brightening as thou approachest! Say, does not yon blessed opening, which overlooks the dark dominion of the grave, more than compensate all the sighs and sufferings, which chequer the present, passing, intervening scene? Lo! there thy long-lost Friend, who still lives in thy remembrance, and warms thy inmost heart, whose presence gave thee more delight than all that life could afford, and whose absence cost thee more groans and tears than all that death can take away — beckons thee to him, that where he is thou mayest be also. “Here, he says, “dwell unmingled pleasures, unpolluted “joys, inextinguishable love, immortal, unbounded, unmolested Friend- “ship. All the sorrows and imper- “fections of mortality are to us, as “though they had never been; and “nothing lives in heaven, but pure,

## DISCOURSE V. 211

" unadulterated virtue. Our hearts,  
 " swelled with rapture, cease to mur-  
 " mur; our breasts, warm with gra-  
 " titude, to sigh; our eyes, charmed  
 " with celestial visions, to water; our  
 " hands, enriched with palms of vic-  
 " tory, to tremble; and our heads, en-  
 " circled with glory, to ache. We are  
 " just as safe as infinite power, as joy-  
 " ful as infinite fullness, and as happy  
 " as infinite goodness, can make us.  
 " Ours is peace without molestation,  
 " plenty without want, health with-  
 " out sickness, day without night,  
 " pleasure without pain, and life with-  
 " out the least mixture or dread of  
 " death."

Happy thou, to whom life has no  
 charm, for which thou canst wish it  
 protracted! Thy troubles will soon  
 vanish like a dream, which mocks the  
 power of memory: and what signify  
 all the shocks which thy delicate and



## 212. VDISCOURSE V.

feeling spirit can meet with in this shock-  
 ing world? A moment longer, and thy  
 complaints are at an end; thy diseases  
 of body and mind shall be felt no more;  
 the ungenerous hints of churlish re-  
 lations distress no more; fortune frown,  
 futurity intimidate, no more. Then  
 shall thy voice, no longer breathing the  
 plaintive strains of melancholy, but  
 happily attuned to songs of gladness,  
 mingle with the hosts of heaven in the  
 last and sweetest anthem that ever mor-  
 tals or immortals sung, "O Death!  
 where is thy plague? O Grave!  
 where is thy victory?"

Blessed God! with what eagerness  
 and extasy shall friends, long or widely se-  
 parated by accident or death, now rush  
 into one another's arms! How gladly  
 shall they mutually recognise the very  
 spirits and sentiments formerly so dear  
 to them! how fondly renew their in-  
 timacies and endearments, and recall

## DISCOURSE IV. 51213

every feeling and idea that were wont to interest and affect them, to lock and knit their souls together! Who would not exult in the sweet anticipation of such a joyful reunion? In this world every thing dies in the twinkling of an eye; and could we live for ever, all the comforts of life would soon leave us alone. O Eternity, Eternity, how equal art thou to the widest wishes of the heart! Then thoughts of parting can hurt us no more. The vicissitudes of times and seasons, the vexatious changes of a shifting scene, the showers and sunshine of a wintry day, the repeated inconveniences of a weary pilgrimage, are all over and gone. How highly and justly elated with new sensations of joy, and new accessions of spirit! Does not immortality glow and brighten afresh in our bodies, as well as in our souls? Lo! Heaven bends downward to receive us, the present bulky system of things bursts from our view, death and

hell lie vanquished at our feet, and all everlasting before and behind compasseth us about.

METHINKS I see some poor, afflicted, forlorn creature, whose life was literally worse than death, whose circumstances were narrow, whose friends were false, whose kindred were cruel, whose sensibility had too fine an edge to encounter the bluntness of a rude unfeeling world, who sighed in society and mourned in solitude, whose days were as void of comfort as her nights were of rest, whose mind had too much sympathy not to feel the misfortunes of others, and too much delicacy to be easy under, or meet with feelings congenial to her own—I see her in the bosom of a Friendship as warm as her heart, as immense as her wishes, as durable as her nature, lifting up her modest eyes in humble triumph, exulting in the full prospect of uninterrupted felicity—Blessed SPIRIT! there rest

# DISCOURSE V. 215

and reign for ever. No malignant fiend shall henceforth, blast thy comfort; no unfriendly hand dash from thy lips this cup of joy; no base surmise flush thy face with confusion; no bitter expression unhinge thy placid temper, ruffle the serenity of thy heart, or furrow thy cheeks with a tear.

What is Heaven, but an asylum to the unfortunate; or Eternity, but the recompence of the wretched?—AMEN.



# DISCOURSE VI

ON

## THE DEATH OF A FRIEND

**DISCOURSE VI.**

**ON**

**THE DEATH OF A FRIEND.**

# DISCOURSE VI.

On the Death of a Friend.\*

ISAIAH lxxv. 8.

It is taken away from the eyes to come away, none considering that the righteous it is heart; and my eyes were taken away, none considering that the righteous it is taken away from the eyes to come.

## THE DEATH OF A FRIEND.

**W**E seldom meet with so many people as are now present, among whom one or more individuals are not groaning under the loss of somebody dear to them. Such is the fluctuating nature of our best enjoyments in the

\* Mr. Thomas Gainsdale, student of divinity. He studied at the college of St. Andrew, where although he had a character of being early and liberally rewarded. He was soon observed by the Chancellor, in a manner that did equal honour to both. His friendship, in whom the delecting always had a friend, marked something uncommonly superior in him, and from that

## DISCOURSE VI.

On the Death of a Friend.\*

ISAIAH, lvii. 1.

*The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.*

**W**E seldom meet with so many people as are now present, among whom one or more Individuals are not groaning under the loss of somebody dear to them. Such is the fluctuating nature of our best enjoyments in the

\* Mr. Thomas Craigdally, student of divinity. He studied at the college of St. Andrew, where rising merit has a chance, at least, of being early and liberally rewarded. He was soon observed by the Chancellor, in a manner that did equal honour to both. His Lordship, in whom the deserving always find a friend, marked something uncommonly superior in him, and from that



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present mortal and dying life. Every thing about us is daily changed, or changing, into some new form. Day invariably springs out of night, and night as invariably concludes the day.

moment treated him with the kindest distinction: nor did he discredit either the discernment or generosity of his noble Patron. Very few at his age discover so much taste and judgment, such prudence and circumspection in their choice of men and books, as he did. He read much, and thought deeply: he was, more than any I ever knew at his time of life, a man of observation. Though little in the world, his knowledge of it was by no means superficial. Popular eloquence was his favourite study; and as he began early to form himself on the best models, he had fair to excel. His love of moral science was singularly fervent; he aimed, above all things, at entering into the spirit of whatever he attempted, and his views of truth were peculiarly just and liberal. The ardour of original minds is often fatal to weak constitutions, and he literally fell a victim to this glorious flame. His warm heart, his amiable temper, and his lively conversation, gave a softness and delicacy to his manners uncommonly

## DISCOURSE VI. 221

Nothing is stable, permanent, or lasting, on this side of eternity. The oaks of the forest as well as the flowers of the field, the heavens as well as the earth, men, manners, theories, opinions, and things, are all subjected to perpetual

pleasing. He was indeed the joy and comfort of all his friends and acquaintance, when living; and, perhaps, there is not one that knew him, who did not sincerely and deeply lament his death. For my own part, his friendship I valued as one of my greatest and best enjoyments; and I doubt much if this world can afford me another connection of the kind, so much to my liking. Those, who know any thing about the endearing interchanges of friendly minds, will easily forgive this small tribute to his memory, whose life I prized so highly, and whose death I feel so much. To make this public mention of his Name and his worth had no little weight with me in this publication; and, had I no other interest in the matter, would the world pardon my presumption, I could wish it to live for his sake. "Tread lightly on his grave, ye Men of Genius, for he was your kinsman: Weed his grave clean, ye Men of Goodness, for he was your brother."

revolution. So emphatically true, as well as inimitably beautiful and sublime, is the Poet's description—

The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
And, like the baseless fabric of a vision,  
Leave not a wreck behind.

There is scarce a moment of our time, which is not marked with some strange unexpected alteration in our circumstances: and the history of Man, even in his best estate, is little better than one prolonged series of disastrous events. To day we associate in gaiety and comfort; and nothing is seen in our very next meeting, perhaps, but the sable badges of woe; nothing heard, but the soft pathetic voice of murmurings and sighs.—

A fact so frequent and affecting, in all the various ranks of life, shall be my apology for chusing these words as

## DISCOURSE VII 273

the ground of our present meditations. They can be unsuitable to none: for, whatever the youngest, the gayest, the liveliest, may now imagine, while the world smiles on them and they on the world, death is common to us all. And though there should be some, as I hope there is none, who think not themselves in the least concerned in discourses of this kind; happy should I be if any thing now said could afford the smallest relief but to one single person, if any such are here, who may now weep for those whom they can never more behold in the land of the living.

In the words of the text three things, which deserve a separate illustration, are distinctly marked.

THAT the death of the righteous is designed by Providence, as an object of religious instruction and improvement to the rest of mankind.



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THAT this dispensation, awful and alarming as it is, makes little or no adequate impression on a blind unthinking world.

THAT whatever surviving relations and others may lose by such a death, happy are they who thus die the death of the righteous, and whose latter end is like his.

That the death of the righteous is designed by Providence as a lesson of the highest moment to the rest of mankind, the text evidently supposes; for, when the prophet says, THE RIGHTEOUS PERISHETH, AND NO MAN LAYETH IT TO HEART, his meaning is, that every man should.

Not to multiply particulars on this head, two things more especially merit our attention.

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The First is, that all must die; for, if the righteous escape not, how or why should the wicked? In this warfare there is, there can be, no discharge. The seeds of corruption lie too deep in the human vitals, to be destroyed by any thing, but that immortality which the Gospel sets before us. What is the day of our birth, but an introduction to the day of our death? and does not every cradle we see remind us of a grave? Are we not accustomed, from the first moment we breathe, to behold our fellow creatures, without distinction of rank or utility, of sex or age, dropping off, one by one, into that house which is appointed for all living? Nor is it less natural for the old to die, than for the fields to mellow in autumn, or for the fruit when ripe to fall from the tree. And who would repine, that the weary Pilgrim reaches his journey's end; that the worn-out Traveller gets to a resting place; or that the Mariner, after a long and

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boisterous voyage, gains a haven of perpetual repose? But must the young and the beautiful also submit to Mortality's supreme command? Surely, though neither the attractions of the former, nor the tenderness of the latter, can possibly avail in that awful hour, real merit, in conjunction with both, might, if any thing could, plead some indulgence.

Figure to yourselves, my dear brethren, A YOUNG MAN, blessed at once with the best heart and the best understanding, his genius of the most exalted kind, and his application equal to his genius. Many and early are the indications of his being one day a public good, a comfort to his relations, and an honour to human nature. His education is liberal and manly. The most valuable sciences replenish his mind; an unwearied attention to classical excellence improves and polishes his taste.

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He grudges no expence of time or labour, where any useful acquisition can be had. The sole ambition with which his heart is fired, is not to be a man of show, but a man of worth: and he possesses all that innate and amiable modesty, which gives internal merit a softer indeed, but much more lovely and endearing garnish; for they only know his true value, who have the happiness of sharing his friendship, and exchanging hearts with his. How just and masterly, how sublime and affecting, his sentiments and conceptions of true Religion! His whole soul is filled and ravished with the glorious objects she exhibits, the prospects she unfolds, and the hopes she inspires. Purity breathes in every thing he says, and sheds a lustre on all he does. His manners are mild and gentle, as the dews of heaven. Innocence itself could hardly make him more cheerful, or age more prudent. Benevolence reigns in his heart, and the law of kindness dwells on



his tongue. Were ever parents more blessed in a son, children in a brother, or friends in a friend, than his are in him, whose only study and delight it is to make the heart of every one glad that is near him? Behold him blooming and rising in gracefulness and strength, among his family, friends, and acquaintance, like some stately oak, which towers above the forest, flings its branches around on every side, and promises a long and comfortable shelter to the neighbouring shrubs! Might not a life so valuable and precious escape, at least for a while, the common lot of humanity? If ever death spared mortal, should it not spare him? What an age of goodness may not be expected from a youth so promising! how rich a harvest from such a spring! Many lives are bound up in his; and, if thus dear to others, how much dearer must he not be to his own! Surely, their incessant prayers in his behalf, and the earnest wishes of all who know him,

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must, if any thing can, secure him a long and comfortable life. O! no: the King of Terrors cannot be bribed, and will not relent. Even this prosperous and promising plant must yet fall in its prime: his eyes but just open on the world, to be shut for ever; and he dies in full strength, while his breasts are full of milk, and his bones moistened with marrow. Not all the groanings of his kindred, who loved him as their own souls; not all the tears of a few congenial minds, who saw and regarded his growing worth with a mixture of admiration and transport; not the most urgent necessities of mankind, which loudly call for some such example, could procure him one moment's reprieve.

And if he, or such as he, should thus perish in the midst of their days, so full of youth, so full of life, so full of hope, so full of whatever could make them amiable in the eyes of heaven, or

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endear them to the world; which of us dare plead prescription against the grave, or expect that on our account the laws of mortality should be altered?

It deserves also to be noticed on this Head, that Providence holds up the death of the Righteous as an event not a little interesting both to heaven and earth: for precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. Even here all good men are peculiarly dear to him. Their very being is an eminent instance of his goodness, and their well-being, of his tenderest mercy. To save them from hell, he spared not his own Son; to prepare them for heaven, he gives them his spirit. Whatever is comfortable in their lot, is of his appointing. Are they blessed with religious parents, and a pious example? Do their relations think well of them, and rejoice in their welfare? Have they the rare consolation of finding, even in

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this foreign, unfriendly, inhospitable world, a few warm-hearted and sentimental enough to share the secrets of their souls, and bear a kind and tender part in all their troubles? This, all this is owing to their heavenly Father, who suffers not an hair to fall from their head, a tear to drop from their eye, or a groan to escape their heart, without his notice. And can their death be indifferent to Him, who expresses so much concern about their lives? Be assured, though none else should lay the death of the righteous to heart, He will, Did the father of the prodigal welcome his return from vice and want, to virtue and fullness; and shall not a kind and gracious God congratulate the deliverance of his people from a sinful and dying condition, to glory, honour, and immortality? Does the conversion of a sinner fill the heavenly world with joy; and must not

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the additional company of a saint be a fresh accession to their gladness?

Still, however, their gain in this respect is our loss : for who can tell how much Society suffers by their death, who were so well qualified to do her the most essential services? Long and severely may all their friends and acquaintance feel and lament their absence. But what earthly thing can fill up the blank it must occasion in the hearts and affections of near and dear relations? How many scenes of mutual tenderness and esteem, and other endearing traces of their memory, without number and without name, too deeply imprinted on the bleeding remembrance of survivors ever to be forgotten, will not frequently recall their dear idea!

From hence let one and all of us be assured, that whatever we most value in this world is only of a frail and perish-

ing duration; that every thing we are fond of will soon be no more; and that the improvement of present blessings is a duty which admits of no delay.

But we proceed, as the text directs, to observe in the second place, that awful and alarming as this dispensation is, it makes little or no adequate impression on a blind, unthinking world; and, perhaps, no better account can be made of such a strange insensibility, in creatures so naturally kind and affectionate, than that they are either too much employed about other things to mind death at all, or not sufficiently acquainted with the value of the righteous to be suitably affected with theirs.

Perhaps they have no leisure, from a thousand other things, to bestow one thought on death. The pleasures of a giddy, insipid life, engross the affections and faculties of some so entirely,

that one would imagine they had got a lease of their lives, and that they were as certain of not dying, as it is that they must. Others are as intense in the pursuit, and as much ingulphed in heaps of the world, as if they thought every thing mortal but wealth. Even pride, selfish and mortifying as it is, and with all the shocking memorials of humility which mark its history, intoxicates and stupifies many to such a degree, that they often know not where, from whence, or what they are: and all mankind are so much taken up with one thing or another, that death, perhaps, is the single thought that seldom or never comes across them.

Nor can they, who hardly think themselves mortal, be easily affected by the spectacles of mortality, which every where surround them. They seem so much accustomed to sights of this kind, so familiar with funeral processions,

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with mourners going through the streets, with dirges, graves, and church-yards, with “sculls and coffins, epitaphs and worms,” that the common feelings of humanity are almost dead within them. Mean while Providence rings this awful peal in their ears—‘Know ye not, O heedless and perishing mortals! that ye now frolic on the dread brink of that black and bottomless gulph, into which the very next touch of sickness may tumble you headlong?—Know ye not, that the health of the stoutest, and the life of the youngest, are often the victims of accident or disease?—Know ye not, that every burial you see is an alarm to judgement, and that, most of all, the death of the righteous is one great, essential, and preparatory step to that important and solemn event!’

The truth is, we have too little value for holiness, to be suitably affected with the death of the righteous. Whoever



consults the Bible with any degree of attention, must, however, be wonderfully pleased to find so much notice taken of the pious and well-disposed in every age of the world. Their welfare seems to be the great concern of heaven and earth. All things work together for their good; angels minister to their necessities, and Providence is their constant protection. For them the earth is blessed with increase, common mercies are continued, seed-time and harvest promised, rains fall, the sun shines, divine patience is prolonged, and the fate of a guilty world suspended. They have a title to adopt the Poet's beautiful apostrophe in all its energy and extent.

For us kind Nature wakes her genial power,  
Suckles each herb, and spreads out ev'ry flower;  
Annual for us, the grape, the rose renew  
The juice nectareous, and the balmy dew;  
For us the mine a thousand treasures brings,  
For us health gushes from a thousand springs;  
Seas roll to waft us, suns to light us life;  
Our footstool earth, our canopy the skies.

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Indeed we must see how much they are esteemed by others around us, and cannot even deny them the silent approbation of our own hearts; for the most vicious, say what they will, are in love with virtue in others, however much they dislike it in themselves. But too near a view of it, by suggesting a comparison that must be painful, makes the absence of good men often less troublesome at least than their presence. We seldom behold their excellence with any real heart-felt esteem. The suffrage of our consciences in their behalf is mostly extorted: and, since that is the case, no wonder we are sometimes foolish enough to think the world would be better without them; no wonder that when they perish, as they often do, so many should witness their departure with indifference, or at most with a blind unconscious gaze. Alas! they see not what a gap such a death makes in life; for the righteous is much more

excellent than his neighbour. They  
 understand not the meaning of Provid-  
 ence in removing those, of whom the  
 world is no longer worthy: they hear  
 not the melody of that heavenly voice,  
 “Blessed are the dead who die in the  
 “Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, that they  
 “may rest from their labours, and their  
 “works do follow them?” Little, ah, how  
 little do they know what a sad and dis-  
 mal situation we are now in! For what  
 is the present life, but a dark and gloomy  
 night, in which our feet are constantly  
 stumbling on a rugged path; our eyes  
 meeting the most shocking spectacles, and  
 our ears accosted by the most piteous  
 lamentations? What are the lives of  
 saints, but so many stars gilding, and  
 sparkling in, our horizon? and what  
 is their death, but the extinction of that  
 light, which is the life, the comfort,  
 the joy, of the world?

We come now to observe, in the Third  
 and last place, that whatever surviving

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relations and others may lose by such a death, happy beyond conception are they, who thus die the death of the righteous, and whose latter end is like his.

Mourn not, Brethren, for them, as those who have no hope; for the heavens are not higher above the earth, than they are above your pity. THEY ARE TAKEN AWAY FROM THE EVIL TO COME. That vengeance, which loiters not, but threatens an impenitent world with destruction, threatens not them. They are launched into the boundless ocean of eternity, far beyond every storm that beats this troubled shore. There they sail at ease, their pains are forgotten, their complaints removed, their perils over, and all their tears wiped away. No more shall their heads ache, their hearts throb, or their spirits sink with sickness. All occasion of suffering and sorrow is destroyed, and the bit-

and last place that whatever surviving



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sternness of their death is literally past. The numerous cares and anxieties, which distract the minds of mortals, distract not theirs; nor are they henceforth subject to one uneasy feeling, one fainting fit, or one foreboding groan. All their frailties and burthens are unloaded, and lodged in the bosom of their God, where they too repose in everlasting satisfaction and triumph. They have fought the good fight, they have kept the faith, they have finished their course, their race is run, and their warfare accomplished. No temptation now can mislead them, nor all the emissaries of hell, for the future, imprint one blemish on their character. Their righteous spirits are no more grieved with the wickedness, their delicate and pious feelings no more hurt by the rage and rudeness, of reprobates. Neglected merit and fashionable folly, oppressed virtue and triumphant iniquity, bleeding innocence and victorious villainy,

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are sights they no longer see; the unhallowed buz of the giddy, the shouts of the voluptuary, the imprecations of the worthless, the acclamations of pride, the cries of poverty, and the groans of wretchedness, sounds they no longer hear. What though their eyes have lost their lustre, their complexions their bloom, and their features their expression;—what though their lips, pleasant and persuasive as they once were, be now shut for ever, and their bodies, however comely and graceful, demolished and loathsome;—what though their organs of sensation forget their wonted functions, the palate to taste, the touch to feel, the ears to hear, and the eyes to see:—It disgusts not them to lie among the dead, that their bones should rot in the grave, or their flesh be a prey to putrefaction and worms. No: these are things which mortify the living, but affect not the dead.

Nor is their happiness merely negative: they are also positively and supremely blessed. That great, adorable, and infinite Being, who engrossed all the faculties of their minds, and all the affections of their hearts, is now known to them even as they are known. Not, indeed, that the divine essence can ever be perceptible to finite minds, in the same manner that one creature is perceptible to another. In this sense we see nothing which we do not comprehend, and Deity is infinitely above all comprehension. They see him, however, so as to be finally satisfied that he is the one true and eternal, the only living and life-giving God: and surely the pleasure, which truth without error, and light without darkness, afford the mind of man, must be inconceivable; but an impartial and full view of moral worth gives birth to the finest and most heavenly sensations, perhaps, that a pure heart can feel. And what is heaven, but supreme goodness unveiled,

but every imitable perfection in the character of God impressed on a sanctified mind? Besides, who can tell what floods of extacy and delight break in upon the souls of the righteous, on mingling in this manner with a society made up of all the greatest, and wisest, and best, that ever were or shall be in the world? How delightful and astonishing the change, from a place where Virtue is a perfect wonder, to a land where she reigns without controul, and shines forth in open, undiminished, and everlasting splendour! There, their intellectual powers feel no fatigue, their taste is not disgusted by deformity, nor their judgements debased by prejudice: their minds are without a cloud, their wills without a bias, and their affections without a stain: all their wants are supplied, all their toils compensated, all their virtues perfect, and all their wishes full: their faith is turned into sight, and their hope into fruition.

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Do we then believe the blessedness of heaven to be thus unspeakable and complete, and should we not be transported to think our departed relations or acquaintance there? Are their temples incircled with a crown of life? Do their hands sustain the palms of immortality? Are they clothed with the garments of salvation? Do they dwell for ever in the house of God? Are they possessed of an inheritance, which fadeth not away? Are the high praises of God in their mouths? Are they blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity, and ought we not to rejoice? Never, O never, let us recall their endearing image to our minds without darting our thoughts and affections after them, in the sweet anticipation of that happy period, when our souls shall once more mingle with theirs. Did all their blessedness in this world consist in making others blessed; and are they not then in their very element, where the

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only object of emulation is, to excel in love and mutual good-will, and where all their fellow saints are much dearer to them than they were to us? For no words can utter, no heart conceive, the purity and richness of that delight, which springs from the social intercourse of minds thus disintangled from the grossness of sense and sensual things. And if they have one single wish ungratified, may it not be, that our hearts were at ease, and our souls as full of blessedness as theirs are? for who knows but that even now they may be looking down upon us with a pitying eye; that their affectionate spirits may yet, though insensibly, mingle and correspond with ours; and that they may still have much more sympathy than we, though without any of those painful emotions, which accompany the exercise of it in this imperfect state?

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In short, for there is no saying all that might be said on this subject, what though we sometimes see the sun of the righteous go down as it were at noon; they leave this, only to shine more glorious in another sphere. Why then should we give way to peevish, unpleasant, unprofitable sadness? Let those cast away their confidence, who see nothing, are certain of nothing, depend on nothing, beyond the grave. Lift up your heads, and welcome the dawning of eternal day, which Hope sheds on your minds. Rest assured that they, whom you now lament as no more, are as much alive and happy as you can wish, or God can make them. They have taken, indeed, in appearance, a long, a last adieu; but your meeting again may not, cannot, be very distant. They are gone to that place whence no traveller returns; but are not many of us well advanced on the same journey? They inhabit the lonely mansions of the

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dead; but their grave is perfumed, and every particle of their dust embalmed, by the breath of Heaven. Their present insensibility is no more than a sleep; and we have the resurrection of the blessed Jesus as a pledge to our very senses, that they shall not sleep for ever.

Know you not, O doubting and disconsolate Christian! that there is a period fixed in the great plan of Providence for raising the dead; and that for this purpose, He, who came to redeem the world when lost, shall come in the clouds of heaven with a mighty shout, with the voice of the Arch-angel, and with the trump of God? Behold him in that very body, which was once nailed to an accursed tree, appearing the second time without sin unto salvation! Heedless as it were of the living, he hastens to relieve the dead. The whole Hosts of God are on wing, and instantly dispatched to the four winds



of heaven with these joyful tidings,  
 "AWAKE AND SING, YE THAT DWELL  
 "IN THE DUST!" Impatient of the  
 chains in which the bodies of his saints  
 are detained, he breaks in pieces the  
 gates of brass, and cuts asunder the  
 bars of iron, bursts open the doors of  
 their prison-house, and re-animates their  
 dried bones with the breath of his mouth,  
 and with the brightness of his coming.  
 He says to the north, Give up; and to  
 the south, Keep not back, bring my sons  
 from afar, and my daughters from the  
 ends of the earth. O Death! he cries  
 with a mighty and majestic indignation,  
 O Death! I will be thy plague; O Grave!  
 I will be thy destruction. The day of  
 vengeance is in my heart, the year of  
 my redeemed is come; repentance shall  
 be hid from mine eyes. Too long hast  
 thou triumphed over mine inheritance;  
 too long hast thou forced thy way  
 through the dearest and tenderest re-  
 lations; too long, regardless of a bleed-

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ing world, have the most excellent ones of the earth glutted thy insatiable cruelty: but henceforth the ignominy of the grave shall cease. Now shall the prey be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive be delivered. The Earth trembles at his rebuke, and no more covers her slain; and the Sea, wild and furious as she is, hears his voice, and yields up her dead. That which was sown in dishonour is raised in glory, mortal puts on immortality, and death is swallowed up of life.—AMEN.

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ing world, and the most excellent one  
of the earth, granted the inheritance  
of the earth, but he will not give  
of the earth itself, he will give  
of the earth, but he will not give  
of the earth itself, he will give  
of the earth, but he will not give  
of the earth itself, he will give

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more to be seen, and the more  
of the earth, but he will not give  
of the earth itself, he will give  
of the earth, but he will not give  
of the earth itself, he will give  
of the earth, but he will not give  
of the earth itself, he will give

GENEROUS DISPOSITIONS.

DISCOURSE VII.

ON THE  
FELICITY  
OF  
GENEROUS DISPOSITIONS.



# DISCOURSE VII.

ON THE

Efficacy of Generous Dispositions.

DISCOURSE VII. ACTS. xix. 35. — It is more blessed to give than to receive.

ON THE

**M**ERITORABLE to this purpose are the many extraordinary benefactions made in behalf of the honest and industrious Poor among us, who suffered to be rescued from the clutches of the late Profl. Trust me, there are deeds worthy of a great and opulent people, worthy of that exalted genius, which has hitherto distinguished us from neighbouring nations, and which shall long and widely pronounce the highest eulogium on the generosity of the English character.

The duty, however, of administering relief to the needy, deeply as it is

## DISCOURSE VII.

ON THE

Felicity of Generous Dispositions.

ACTS xx. 35.

*—It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

MEMORABLE to this purpose are the many extraordinary benefactions made in behalf of the honest and industrious Poor among us, who suffered so much from the intenseness of the late Frost. Trust me, these are deeds worthy of a great and opulent people, worthy of that exalted GENIUS, which has hitherto distinguished us from neighbouring nations, and which shall long and widely pronounce the highest eulogium on the generosity of the English character.

The duty, however, of administering relief to the needy, deeply as it is

enforced by every idea that can enter into the mind of man, receives its truest and firmest support from that system of religious belief, which obtains in modern times. Suppose a man, of great sensibility and no religion, to live long and much in the busy world. If possessed of any talent for remark, a thousand instances of human depravity and profligacy will undoubtedly give him an aversion to the species. In that situation, his whole soul cannot furnish him with a single idea to counteract the workings of a moping and misanthropical spirit. The perfidy of mankind must appear to him in colours so detestable and enormous, that he sometimes renounces all kindred and connexion with them, and execrates them while he lives. But he who lives in the joyful persuasion, that all human affairs are still under the wise and equitable management of supreme Intelligence and inexhaustible Benignity, whatever should happen to

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him, he can never be irreconcilably disgusted with any of his fellow creatures. Injuries may, no doubt, rouse his sensibility, and the candour of his nature prompt him to speak out; for Christianity neither enervates nor petrifies the human constitution; but his feelings, though uttered with manliness and spirit, will be tempered with honour and generosity. Principles influence his mind, which unite him to the species by the tenderest ties, which make him a sharer with them in the same hope, and interest him in the same fate, and which work them by degrees into the very core of his heart. He considers them all as brothers and sisters, and, however undutiful they should be to him, finds himself bound, by the authority and example of his Father in heaven, to love and cherish them to the utmost of his power.

You, who read the Bible, will instantly recollect a glorious assemblage of



characters, which severally confirm and illustrate this idea. And you, who mind nothing but Novels, may yet find it dilated with astonishing energy and minuteness in the History of Clarissa Harlow. Shall I beg to be forgiven quoting a book, which appears to me the best of the kind that ever was written; a book replete with that sublime and rational piety, which runs and operates through the most trying and intricate situations in life, and gives an idea of Virtue in distress, of female dignity and perfection overwhelmed with every calamity, the most finished and complete that ever was framed? In express imitation of Him “who spake as never man spake,” it converts the most trivial incidents that occur, into so many living monitors, and points every thought that stirs in the mind of man, to his best and highest concerns. Here you see the Feminine mind teeming with all those elegant softnesses, which gives it a lustre so inimitably grace-

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lful and captivating, and yet exerting a  
 strength and intrepidity, which the most  
 artful and complicated system of villainy  
 that ever was hatched can never relax;  
 which no misfortunes enervate; which  
 renders Virtue triumphant where Nature  
 shudders, and Life relinquishes the contest.  
 The inhuman monster who prosecutes her  
 ruin with unrelenting perfidy and savage  
 rage, who first accomplishes a breach  
 between her and her nearest relations,  
 then tears her from the bosom of her  
 family and friends, next throws her into  
 a state of the most abject dependence and  
 destitution, and last of all stoops to every  
 inhumanly advantage which these cir-  
 cumstances give him over her, notwith-  
 standing the horror she justly conceives  
 of his character and crimes, she forgives,  
 and prays for his reformation and for-  
 giveness with her latest breath. To bring  
 No principles give Human Nature  
 such wonderful sublimity in all her moral

and active powers, as the principles of true religion. Every other system, somehow, enfeebles and degrades her, throws her perpetually off her guard, and introduces the most awkward metamorphoses into all her finest appearances; but this reclaims her wandering affections, repels her turbulent appetites, and represses the whole tribe of malignant passions, by exciting those of another and nobler tendency: and, in proportion as felt in its purity and power, men begins to learn that the heart suffers by confinement, and that the highest felicity lies in imparting felicity to others.

Thus, atrocious as the world is, the divinity of Virtue still goes to the very bottom of the human soul; inasmuch, that I greatly doubt, if ever there was a being in human form wholly insensible to the charms of true generosity. No; there certainly never was. The Miser, the Profligate, the Bounteous, and the

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Poor, all admit the truth, because all have felt the energy, of these words—  
IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.

Mortifying as it is to the Great, the Lowest reflect with joy, that all exterior distinctions are merely temporary and local. The splendour of riches is a meteor which dazzles this moment, and disappears the next; and the original equality of mankind is one of those few truths, which produce conviction as soon as proposed. We all come into the world with the same wants and imperfections, deprecate the same infirmities, feel the same indigence, and are more or less obnoxious to the same perils and diseases. But Nature, like a kind and provident parent as she is, prevents our necessities by the richest supplies.

Every sort of human perfection is wisely placed in human exertion. To



whatever inconveniences we may be exposed, singly and alone, we have therefore the most inexhaustible resources in all those social and sentimental propensities, which every where involve our interests, and cement our hearts. Indeed, the members of our bodies act not more literally in concert with one another, than we do; nor can they perform their respective functions more spontaneously, or with less consciousness, than the young unadulterated heart gives into all the endearing and dignified attachments of humanity.

Thus society may be considered as one great and general asylum, opened and provided by a gracious Providence, for the reception and relief of human kind from all the ills and inconveniences of solitude. Here the naked are clothed, the hungry fed, the weak defended, the injured redressed, and the wretched soothed into comfort. And what is that

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original and universal chain, by which all the parts of this seemingly discordant and multifarious system are combined and linked together with so much comeliness and consistency, but BENEFICENCE? So true is the observation, that no man lives intirely for himself. Our very existence, as brethren depends on a mutual exchange of good offices. We literally live on the wants, whether natural or artificial, of one another; and they who are born under a government like ours, which allows them to do what they please consistently with law, virtually pledge their all in support of that government. She confers liberty on her subjects, and receives from their union and loyalty that force and stability which cherish and preserve it. In this sense there is not perhaps a community on earth, in which the individual can call either his property or his life his own. The radical, the tacit, the acknow-

ledged condition, on which his claims to its privileges are founded, is, that he shall have no will, no interest, no law, but that of the Public. If he cannot live by his own industry, he lives by theirs; if his life is attacked, they defend him; if his property is seized, they afford him redress. In return he is their servant, at their call, in their power. If they need his purse, it is open; if they need his life, he is ready to surrender it; his possessions are wholly at their disposal; and he deserves not the name of a man, who scruples to shed his blood in their cause.

These are the patriotic principles which confer the highest dignity and importance on social life, which Nature implants in every rational breast, which raise the spirits of the ancients so vastly above the ambition of these degenerate days, and which stamp an everlasting worth on human virtue. On this beau-

tiful and exalted idea Plato rears a system of politics and morals that has been the wonder of succeeding ages; from this source Greece becomes immortal; by this union Rome possessed universal empire; on this plan the Christian constitution is framed.

Nothing exhibits the benignity of Nature in richer colours, than that peculiar felicity which attends the exercise of all our social and relative affections. There is a certain happiness in acting our part well, whatever that part should be, which cannot be attained by any other means; and the best lesson that ever unassisted Reason whispered in the ears of Humanity was, "that Virtue is her own reward." The mind as well as the body is braced and improved by action; and that strength which diligence imparts, is the very thing which constitutes our happiness. So that whoever fills best the station in which Providence



hath placed him, must be happiest. Mark among all your acquaintance, as far as the circle of your knowledge extends — mark that man who makes the best Father, the best Son, the best Magistrate, the best Subject, the best Master, the best Servant, the best Friend, the best Neighbour; and you shall always and uniformly find him most satisfied with himself, most cheerful, most blessed.

Every one allows and feels, that the completion of desire, like the gratification of appetite, is agreeable and consolatory. Thus, being needy and dependent creatures, our pleasures are happily connected with the frequent reception of supplies, equally indispensable to our being and well-being. But that the act of GIVING should produce more endearing and sublime sensations than that of RECEIVING, is not commonly believed, and must ever be a paradox to vulgar and selfish

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hearts. Let us try then the truth of the assertion, by a comparative view of the parties concerned. The speculation is at least amusing, and may be useful.

INDIGENCE sometimes suppresses the human faculties, at other times cankers the finest dispositions of the heart. In such a situation who would not pity a man of sentiment and spirit? Disgusted with the vulgarities of the vulgar, and precluded by his circumstances from sharing the refinements of more enlightened minds, he associates with neither; but, the dupe of a delicacy eternally awake to every inconvenience, lives in misery, probably dies of the spleen. How few deign to make his ease their own! how many wantonly misconstrue whatever he does or says! Born to adversity, and tugged through life with unrelenting harshness, while the worthless and insignificant are pam-

pered in the very bosom of luxury, and withall but little schooled perhaps in the art of disguising his feelings, no wonder his oppressed spirits, like those of Job, sometimes break loose. In that case then, will the friends of the one be more favourable, humane, and generous, than those of the other? Alas! the very things which proceed unavoidably from his misfortunes, are quoted against him as instances of imprudence. Because he may resent, with honesty and warmth, the unworthy treatment he sometimes meets with, airs of distant and superlative contempt are assumed; the language extorted by his condition is considered as the intemperate effusions of a bad heart, as the unhallowed fallies of a malevolent mind; his complaints, as the exclamations of pride: and the more he grapples with adversity, the more he is blamed for ambition and impatience. Tell me, thou who censur'st so roundly, who made thee a judge of any in a con-

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dition dissimilar to thine own. The  
fever of misfortune never fermented thy  
blood, never inflamed thy brain, never  
wrung thy heart; and how canst thou  
pretend to say what may be felt, or  
how far the mind may lose her ballast, in  
extremities to which thou art a stranger?

Thus teased and tantalized by the  
caprice or criminality of the world, a  
good man may be violent, may be un-  
guarded; but that violence is the na-  
tural excrecence of a rooted candour,  
and for that reason entitled to sympathy,  
to indulgence, to applause. A knave can  
yield to circumstances, can deceive you  
into an opinion of his good-nature, when  
he meditates your ruin, can at least  
with-hold the blow till he has it in his  
power to strike home. He acts a glo-  
rious part, who suffers not his heart to  
fester with injuries, but instantly and  
openly complains, that the aggressor  
by a manly and immediate reparation



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may close the wound he inflicted. Darkness is the very element of wickedness; and a base mind is eternally wrapped in clouds. Hence your very sage and circumpect characters, who conjure up in endless succession abundant doubts and fears on all occasions, who are full of hesitation and caution, have either a large share of timidity or art, are either very weak, or very worthless.

The philosopher, who lives in ease and affluence, who never puts the selfishness or generosity of his friend to the test, to whom the whole world are of course complaisant and good-natured, has no reason at all to be chafed and out of humour with his fellow creatures. From him, assuredly, every sarcasm has its root in virulence; for that temper must be inherently and constitutionally malignant, which quarrels without provocation, which smarts without being injured, which wantonly and

indiscriminately pushes alike at all, without being assailed by any. Even Religion, glowing as she is with all the love, and smiling with all the meekness of Heaven, corrects, indeed, and restrains the wrath of man, but robs him not of his spirit; and the very best, though incapable of implacability, are apt enough, on some occasions at least, to speak "unadvisedly with their lips."

An independent mind, while buried in want and wretchedness, will yet, on certain occasions, burst the gloom of obscurity, and exhibit an intrinsic vigour which never appears to so much advantage as in circumstances of distress. The insensible influence of wealth, however, more or less, debauches every mind.

A man of property may say or do what he will, without the imputation of temerity or insolence; but he who wants money, meets with no respect at all.

Good God! how long, in this strange preposterous world, shall the taste and understanding be prostituted to the mean

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prepossessions of a mercenary heart! how long the folly of the rich pass for wisdom, and the wisdom of the poor for folly!

We are naturally and strongly disposed to struggle with every difficulty and hardship. In this original aptitude society, industry, the arts, the sciences, the virtues, have all their foundations: but the friendless often want the means to give their efforts success, and by the wayward course of things are for the most part able only to complain. This, however, though the first resource of the worthless, is commonly or always the last of the worthy; for modesty is the only permanent badge of true merit.

Well do the feeling know that assistance is seldom received without pain. A mind, truly alive to all the beautiful and tender vibrations of the finest delicacy, is easily alarmed, and would rather submit to every possible mortifi-

## DISCOURSE VI

cation than touch the rude, unhallowed,  
 boon of the vulgar. There are, indeed,  
 whose manner of giving, wonderfully  
 endears and sweetens the gift; but still  
 nothing can preclude the degrading ideas  
 of dependence, which it brings along  
 with it. Our inferiority acquires ad-  
 ditional magnitude in our own eyes, from  
 every new favour we receive; and, be-  
 cause unable to discharge the debt of  
 gratitude to our wishes, it lies like a  
 burthen on our hearts. The tongue,  
 where there is least sentiment, is often  
 most prodigal of profession; and the  
 world are but ill disposed to credit the  
 acknowledgements of a POOR MAN.  
 True modesty imposes reserve; and re-  
 serve in this case may be sometimes mis-  
 taken for ingratitude, which of all other  
 bad things he abhors the most.

Thus that sensibility, which in ano-  
 ther situation might have rendered every  
 object joyous, every sensation pleasing,  
 and every new succession of ideas more



charming than the former, blasted by the chilling breath of Misfortune, damps the genial beams which society sheds on the mind, gives the heart a sadness which tinges and adulterates its finest sentiments, disrobes the fair creation of all its glories, and wraps the earth and heavens in gloomy horror.

How different then the swellings of a generous heart in narrow and affluent circumstances ! Here every wish is accompanied with the power of execution ; and all the workings of that divine sympathy, which gives humanity so many charms, have immediate vent. Certainly nothing can produce more permanent and substantial bliss than a consciousness of soothing the disconsolate, befriending the destitute, assisting the fatherless and widow, relieving distressed virtue from contempt, preventing those blushes which petulance and pride so frequently awaken in an honest

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countenance, introducing unassuming worth to the attention it deserves, and disburthening the over-charged heart of its sorrow.

The exercise of benevolence seems peculiarly congenial to the female character; and among a thousand amiable things, in which women are evidently superior to the other sex, this is none of the least. Their frames are much more susceptible of soft and generous impressions than ours, and they are less able, perhaps less willing, to stifle the many tender emotions of pity, which agitate their souls, than we are. The truth is, and why should we attempt to hide or disguise it? they have an ardour and openness of sensibility about them, which we have not: and whatever of softness, or delicacy, belongs to the ingenuous expression of humanity, is singularly characteristic of their natures. Formed by the hand of Heaven for

sweetening the scenes of domestic life, their hearts are originally modelled and tempered for the mildest and dearest attachments. It is in tenderness, in sentiment, in sublimity of affection, and gentleness of soul, their chief excellence lies : for, though they should yield to us in strength and steadiness, extent and elevation of understanding, in whatever relates to feeling at least, which is by far the noblest and divinest part of the system, they rise infinitely above us. Hence their pity is more soothing, their sympathy more intensely affecting, and all their attentions much more interesting and grateful, than ours. Masculine sensibility still conveys an idea of severity or rigidity, which but ill comports with offices of tenderness, and yet without which our compassion were unmanly and effeminate : but female sensibility is a celestial flame, that melts without mortifying ; the sweetest emanation of Divinity, that cheered the

benighted breasts of mortals; so inexpressibly gracious and acceptable, that Nature seems to have designed it chiefly for a SYMPHONY to the querulous voice of distressed Humanity: and those of the sex, who cultivate most the chaste and elegant refinements of the heart, minister and preside, with the meekness and benignity of angels, in all those diligent and winning assiduities, which relax the rigour of misfortune, and lessen the calamities of life.

Indeed, the cares of a family, and repeated instances of ingratitude, may, in time, repress the generous ardour of compassion in them, as well as in us; for old age in both sexes is often tinged with a sternness, of which in an earlier period we have no conception. But there is hardly a young woman to be found, even among the gay and the fashionable, who, in certain circumstances, can withhold either the tear of pity, or the beam of



generosity. In the very absence of Virtue, where the mind broods not over the endearing consciousness of its own worth; where true Rectitude, the living badge of internal greatness, has no place; and where Innocence, the blithest and sweetest companion that ever visited the shades of solitude, no longer inhabits the female breast; amidst habitual sallies of levity and merriment, perpetual attention and conformity to the minutest peculiarities of the mode, and an everlasting succession of incident and bustle, where impertinence is thought vivacity, dissimulation truth, wantonness nature, and affectation grace; **BENEFICENCE** often steps forth in a figure so majestic and commanding, that Selfishness flies before her, and all the little spectres of Interest and Ambition are fain for a while to hide their heads in silent confusion. How much more amiable and affecting the exertion of this noble disposition, where the Graces in all the bashfulness

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of virgin modesty dance attendance, and where the Virtues with a dignified aspect smile the highest approbation!

There is not, perhaps, a more engaging and lovely object, in all the creation of God, than an elegant Young Lady, equally distinguished by birth and fortune, attending in this manner to the wants of what she conceives to be modest worth, and generously stooping to supply them. O ye Fair! what additional charms might you not derive from the bounteous diffusion of that wealth, which often renders you so exceedingly ridiculous! How would it heighten every grace, and give your sex an unlimited empire over every heart! Assuredly, she ranks with the highest order of intelligent natures, whose affections are thus happily attuned to every tender and humane emotion: for you must suppose her possessed of sentiments, and modes of thinking and acting, which have but

few precedents in life, who, in spite of all that distracts and inflames intemperate youth, can work herself up to such a pitch of virtue. Abject and uncultivated minds possess no liberal ideas, have no excentricity, dare not rise above the slavery of custom, want that true ardour which is essential both to great conceptions and prompt exertion; and the circle, which limits and contracts their best emotions, is the trite and selfish circle of the vulgar. But her character is formed on more exalted principles: her heart, engrossed by no mercenary and degrading system, takes a much nobler range, and her actions every where proceed on a larger scale. How many in her circumstances, with spirits not half so joyous, and figures much less formed to please than hers, are yet so totally ingulphed in the fashionable formalities of life, as totally to forget what they owe both to themselves, and to all the world! They seem as if they durst

not hazard a thought beyond the pitiful system of dissipation, which the worth-  
 less of every kind so artfully introduce  
 and patronize. The unvaried rotations  
 of the day, and incessant repetitions of  
 the evening, take up their whole atten-  
 tion; and all their pains and powers are  
 most shamefully devoted to the toilette,  
 and fantastic finery of the times. What  
 they lavish thus heedlessly in superfluous  
 extravagance, on the embellishment of  
 charms which no art can long preserve,  
 on decorations which, like the blossom  
 of the spring, reflect at most but a tem-  
 porary lustre, on the acquisitions of  
 pleasures which have no durable sub-  
 stance, SHE carefully accumulates for  
 indulging the more grateful and heart-  
 felt luxury—the luxury of DOING GOOD.  
 Superior as she is to want in all its fright-  
 ful and hideous forms, her lively and  
 sympathetic imagination is no stranger  
 to the cruel inroads it is daily making  
 on human felicity. How different her



manner from theirs, whose insufferable haughtiness and austerity is a fund of eternal uneasiness to all about and below them ! Alas ! she is too susceptible of sorrow and suffering, in every part of her own tender and sentimental frame, ever to be the author of them in another. How much is she shocked with the crimes and impurities, which tarnish and degrade humanity ! yet would she not wish to exchange her being, unless perhaps for that of some pitying Angel, to wipe away the tears from the eyes, to mitigate the sufferings, and catch the sighs of the wretched, as they constantly ascend, like cloudy columns of fragrant incense, before the heavenly throne.

Whether you trace her through public or private life, the same decent and dignified deportment, the same amiable serenity and equanimity of temper, the same unruffled sweetness and affability of manners, the same soaring and disa-

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interested benignity of soul, still point her out as a Model to her sex, in every grace that adorns, in every virtue that exalts, in every sentiment that endears them. With a taste for all those endowments, whether of head or heart, which could so elevate and improve the human character, under whatever form they appear, her highest ambition is to cherish and countenance them. Relief is always salutary and grateful to the needy; but relief, with so much gentleness and delicacy as hers, is enough to revive the saddest heart, and grace the ministration of an angel.

Such uncommon magnanimity, and perseverance in the amiable exercise of every amiable virtue, must be founded in the best principles which either reason or religion can produce; must result from a settled persuasion, that true felicity has no existence, but in doing well. Undisciplined tempers are sel-

marked with any sort of excellence: Nature, in her, is refined and purified by an energy and spirit perfectly divine: Religion, by extending her ideas, gives new scope to her best affections; multiplies her attachments, spreads out her feelings on all sides, and deeply interests her in the welfare of the whole species. The genius which animates and guides her in every possible situation, is the Genius of Sympathy and Tenderness. This divine flame glows perpetually and fervently in her breast, darts a blaze of light through her whole mind, is the joy of her heart, and the glory of her life.

Heavens ! what inconsiderate, silly creatures are many of the sex ! how devoid of sentiment, how insensible to true indulgence, how deaf to the voice of genuine Nature ! Ah ! thou slave of folly and whim ; how my aching heart feels and pities thy wretchedness, glit-

tering as thou art, and loaded with embroidery, and rings, and jewels without number. Surely, imagination needs not be on the stretch for comfort to a mind at ease. Starting eternally from scene to scene, is no sign of present satisfaction; and she who has the habit of disclosing her heart among friends, or possesses any degree of true self-enjoyment, will not readily be caught gadding much abroad. Tell me, ye vagrant votaries of emptiness and gaiety, who explode from your company and conversation every sober and moral idea, who affect only those pleasures and that prattle in which the soul has no share; after fatiguing your bodies, jading your spirits, and murdering your time, tell me seriously, have you one agreeable sensation left, to prevent reflections on the past, or preclude the pangs which otherwise must inevitably fill up your intervals of madness? Ah! no, the peevish voice, the vacant face, and the lan-



guid eye, are sure, but sad indications of internal depression and disorder.

Happy, happy, art thou among women, who knowest from the sweetest experience, that a series of generous actions is a fund of the sublimest satisfaction that can be felt on this side of heaven! Thy memorial shall be precious and dear in the world, while one trace of it lives in human remembrance: the blessings of those who were ready to perish shall rest for ever on thy head, and their daily wishes and breathings, in thy behalf, ascend, and meet with an honourable acceptance, before the throne of God; for the wretched, however destitute on earth, are seldom without interest, because never without a friend, in heaven. With what astonishment, extacy, and distinction, do ministering angels, who are now the invisible spectators of human action, mark thy feeling bosom and thy liberal hand! Though

misfortunes, to which the best are often most obnoxious, should invade thy hallowed retirements, and chequer thy innocent and useful life with sickness or sorrow; a mind like thine, for ever brooding over its own sweet sensibilities, would instantly wrap itself up in the dear elysium of a virtuous heart. This lifts thy affections above the earth, and all earthly concerns, mitigates the horror of a momentary dissolution, and even reconciles thee to the grave, from whose "ponderous and marble jaws" no human being is exempted: and, when that concluding scene comes, which finally dissolves the human drama, which completes the hopes and fears of mortals, a voice from the throne of Heaven shall openly and audibly pronounce thee — BLESSED.

I cannot forbear addressing myself to you on this occasion, who have frequently made the experiment, and may now be supposed to know the utmost lengths

that riches can go, to give you satisfaction.

The charms of wealth seem at first sight, and at a distance, irresistible; and who knows not that covetousness often steals a march on the most generous intentions? Independence is a bait, which all, who see not the hook it conceals, snatch at with greediness; and ease, a bribe seldom unacceptable to the best. Are you willing then to grudge no fatigue of body or mind; to risque every thing in the acquisition; to forego the delights of an ingenuous, and become obnoxious to all the plagues of a mercenary mind; to shut yourselves up from the pleasures, that you may not share the expence of society; to be envied by the poor, and detested by the good; to rob your hearts of their purity, and your consciences of their peace; to toil while others rest, and watch while others sleep; to steel your hearts against the

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tender sympathies of sorrow, and hear the cries of the needy as if you heard them not; to be torn with anxiety, and starved alive? These are the Articles you must give in exchange for riches: on this condition, and on this only, they are yours.

Supposing you then in possession of such a dear-bought treasure, have you no reason at all to suspect that it may be given you for a curse, instead of a blessing; and that the whole circle of your happiness may be confined to your senses? Perhaps, you wish no higher enjoyment than these afford. Only take a view of the world: does it merit the least regard, but as connected with another? Trust me, things cannot, will not, always flatter you at this rate: your present intoxication must soon evaporate, and leave you without pleasures, without spirits, and without a heart. In these dark disconsolate mo-



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ments, when all nature frowns about you, and life teems with insignificance and sorrow, what comfort will it give, that the best of your time has been wasted in distraction, or that the whole magazine of vanity and vice is within your grasp? Does not the complexion of Providence then strike you in all its apparent deformity, and the uncertain destiny, which hangs over the heads of mortals, fill you with the deepest astonishment and concern? Believe it, my dear hearers, riches seldom or never take wings in this manner, and flee away, without leaving a sting behind.

Indeed, were happiness made up of delicate and costly viands, of splendid equipage and gorgeous apparel, of mere animal indulgence and tinsel exterior, it might be a question, where the indolent Sons of Luxury could be better than they are? But I appeal to your own hearts, if you are not frequently

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1  
 dull and spiritless, while all is jollity  
 around you; if you are not even wretched,  
 while the whole earth administers to  
 your gratification. Strange, that things  
 should strike us so habitually in a wrong  
 light; and that the human Mind, con-  
 genial as she is to reality, should so very  
 seldom recognise it! Can riches give  
 you a value in the sight of God, which  
 you have not; disappoint the grave of  
 its prey, relax the severity of eternal  
 justice, or mitigate that vengeance  
 which will pursue, overtake, and fi-  
 nally overwhelm, the impenitent? Alas!  
 they abate not even the rage of a fever,  
 give no relief in a shock of the palsy, no  
 ease in a fit of the gout. No, though  
 all the mines that enrich the bowels of  
 the earth were in thy possession, step but  
 forth into the open air, and the sun  
 shall strike thee as fiercely, the rains  
 drench thee as thoroughly, and the  
 winds visit thee with as little ceremony,  
 as the very poorest of the poor. So much

wiser is inanimate Nature, than we are, in what is best entitled to respect.

Is property then to be relinquished, and every levelling principle introduced at a venture? By no means. Take cognizance of your own feelings; you are happy, indeed, if you have no friends, no acquaintance, who need your assistance. How many worthy families would thank you, as long as they live, for the smallest pittance! Did you ever turn aside to visit the lonely habitation of the widow and the fatherless, and behold in what meagre and ghastly forms Humanity lies bleeding under the savage grasp of Penury? See the tender-hearted mother, half perished with cold and hunger, hanging with unappeasable anguish over her hapless and starving offspring! O, how I envy the fortunate hand, which restores them to life and comfort! Go, if you wish to be blessed, explore in this manner the haunts of wretchedness, and

lay open your bosoms to all the soft sensations of the tenderest sympathy : then shall you know and feel the true pleasure of being rich, and, like the generous plant which fattens its own soil, feast deliciously on the generous influence you shed around you.

On this bounteous plan the supreme government of nature proceeds; and every instance of divine administration is an example, an encouragement, a motive to you. The blessings of Providence are often unsolicited and unexpected, as if their gracious Author consulted our delicacy in dispersing them. Thus, when you see him breathing comfort through every mode of existence, every thing in its season, and every inferior nature in its place, smiling and cheerful throughout the universe; should not the wretchedness of human kind excite your sympathy, and prompt your beneficence?



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Think, O think, how good the God of Heaven is to you ! Are not all his dispensations in your behalf marked with peculiar tenderness ? Wherever you are, and wherever you go, do not goodness and mercy continually follow you ? What is your whole lives, but one constant emanation of the richest benignity ; but a stream from that overflowing fountain of bliss, by which all the angels of heaven, and all the inhabitants of the earth, all beings, and all worlds, are so liberally and habitually blessed ? Are you happy in domestic connexions, in kind relations, dutiful children, and trusty servants ? Do friends start up, which you did not expect, and treat you with a confidence and cordiality which fills you with gratitude ? What is it, about your person or circumstances, you like best ? Are you happiest in a sentimental mind, a handsome exterior, a great fortune, a good character, a sympathising companion, or a liberal friend ? From God you have all—and all, because

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he is good even to the evil and unthankful. Others may grow indifferent to your loudest complaints; but his gratuities, like himself, are unchangeable. While his government endures, wretchedness can never predominate; and, though all hell were let loose, a look of his eye, or a word of his mouth, could remand every devil to his chains.

Surely, the least return you can make for such a profusion of mercies, is to imitate, as much as possible, this kind Master, this loving Friend, this indulgent Parent. Would you give with dignity, with generosity, with grace; copy his unlimited beneficence, which extends through all, lives in all, reigns in all. Mark how imperceptibly, and silently, and softly, his blessings descend! The hand of Heaven flings largely around; every living thing basks in its Maker's smile, every want is filled, and every heart glad.

And who, that have it in their power, would not taste “the joy of God, to see  
“a happy world?”

I cannot dismiss this subject without dropping a few words to you, my beloved hearers and fellow sufferers, to whom Prosperity has hitherto been very shy of her favours. Indeed, you have not a feeling about your circumstances, which does not touch in the most sensible manner every sentiment of my heart. I mean not to silence, but to soothe you. To insult you, would be as mean, as it would be cruel; and sympathy imparted with delicacy is, of all other cordials, the most welcome and salutary to a mind in distress.

I know, when impatience rages, you may perhaps wish for wings to range at large with the birds of heaven; or fins to plunge and glide in common with the fish of the sea, or indeed for any

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thing rather than your present station, where there is not a spot on which you can set a foot, which is not the property of another; as if Nature, in your case, produced more children than she can provide for, or, at least, were unwilling to extend her mansions as her family increased. Strange! Can the Author of all things be envious of the small pittance of happiness which riches afford, that he distributes them with so sparing a hand? or does he allow a few only, the superior indulgence, of living on the sweat, the industry, the vitals of the rest, that the minority may be blessed, and the majority miserable?

Quarrel not, thou Grasshopper! with an all-wise Providence, or presume with thy scanty powers to fathom the deeps of unsearchable wisdom. An overweening curiosity, prompted by petulance and pride, suggests questions endless, impious, unanswerable. What is human



nature, what is human life, but a mixture of good and ill? Such is the world, such the state of things in the world; such it has been, and will be to the last. Blessing and cursing, flowers and weeds, are so closely interwoven in the garden of Life, that the latter must unavoidably come up with the former. Many of the most lovely and delicate roses, in the moral as well as in the natural world, are surrounded with prickles. The sun never shines brighter than before, or sweeter than after, a shower: and the smiles and graces, which wanton on the face of Nature, seldom sparkle so lovely as when followed or preceded by a storm. There is scarce a pleasure we attain, but at the expence of some virtue; scarce a suffering we endure, but what is intended to terminate in the destruction of some vice.

Ambition is the great foible of the human heart, and pregnant with almost

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every plague that embitters and embroils the life of man. We aspire as naturally as we move, and equally hector in every situation. The moment fancy takes fire, all the reasoning of the world cannot suppress the flame. But why would you exchange that beautiful variety and subordination, which through all existence marks the adjustments of intelligence, for an equality, which, for aught you know, is impossible? Go, exert the powers which Nature hath given thee. All life lies open before thee, and thou mayest either degrade thyself beneath the brutes, or rival superior natures by application. Hardships is the natural foil in which all great virtues are planted, bud, and blossom, and break forth into a full harvest of glory. The sphere, in which mere animals are destined to move, is as limited as it is low; but thine own heart tells thee, at times, that all Nature is too narrow for thy wishes. Thy progress will be the

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more conspicuous and meritorious, that it takes its rise from a beginning so very imperceptible. Poverty gives thee an opportunity of improving by the exertion of talents that might otherwise have slept for ever: Poverty supercedes all those wants, and retrenches all those superfluous desires, which trifle so cruelly with the happiness of multitudes: Poverty quashes an immoderate love of life, breaks the spell which fascinates the senses, purifies the temper, mellows the heart, and prepares the mind for that glorious flight to futurity, which, soaring far beyond the confines of misery and guilt, terminates at once in the full fruition of a blessed immortality.

This world often strikes me merely as a school of military discipline, in which the world often turn out in files, and the best run the gantlope, and who would envy their post, who act but the part of executioners at the best? How many,

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intoxicated with prosperity, and blinded by the mercenary sycophants that surround them, are a burden to themselves, a scourge to society, live in slavery, and die in despair! And is not thy situation better than theirs? The world cannot mortify thee as it mortifies them. What though thy bed should be harder, thy clothes coarser, and thy food less sumptuous than theirs? Trust me, thy sleep is not less refreshing, that thou canst not doze on down; thy body less comfortable, that it is not swaddled in silk; or thy health less vigorous, that it is not pampered with wines, and spices, and delicacies without end.

In one word—and may heaven stamp it deeply on our hearts!—let each of us be as good as we can, and, whatever becomes of the world, we shall yet be happy. A revolution in favour of Virtue is determined, and shall take place in spite of earth and hell. Then the in-



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vidious distinctions of wealth and rank shall be forgotten, and all mankind find themselves on a footing of perfect equality with one another: so that life is really too short, and too trifling, to render any thing greatly affecting, or of much consequence, that can happen to us here.—AMEN.

THE END.

